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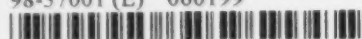
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development

**Workshop on Ensuring Access to Social Services of
Under-served Populations****Note by the Secretary-General**

1. In its resolution 1996/7, the Economic and Social Council decided on the substantive items of the agenda for the Commission for Social Development at its future sessions and a multi-year programme of work for the consideration of priority themes. The Commission discussed the eradication of poverty at its special session in 1996; it considered productive employment and sustainable livelihoods at its thirty-fifth regular session in 1997. In 1998, at its thirty-sixth session, the Commission gave attention to promoting social integration and the participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons. The priority themes for the thirty-seventh session of the Commission in 1999 will be social services for all and an initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

2. In its resolution 1995/60, the Council decided that the Commission for Social Development should establish the practice of opening its debates to experts and the main actors of civil society so as to enhance knowledge and understanding of social development and the exchange of information and experience. Further, in its resolution 1996/7, the Council reaffirmed the need for ensuring an effective partnership and cooperation between Governments and the relevant actors of civil society, the social partners and the major groups as defined in Agenda 21,¹ including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, in the implementation of and follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, and for ensuring their involvement in the planning, elaboration, implementation and evaluation of social policies at the national level.

* E/CN.5/1999/1.



3. Accordingly, in preparing for the thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development and in response to the expressed intentions of the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Secretariat organized an expert workshop on ensuring access to social services of under-served populations, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The workshop was hosted by the National Institute of Development Administration of Thailand and held at Bangkok from 2 to 6 November 1998. Financial support for the participation of experts from developing countries was provided by the Department for International Development of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The workshop brought together experts from all world regions and observers from the United Nations system and civil society.

4. The report of the workshop is annexed below.

Notes

¹ In addition to the social partners (representatives of trade unions and of business and industry), the other major groups identified in Agenda 21 are women, children and youth; indigenous people; non-governmental organizations; local authorities; the scientific and technological community, and farmers.

Annex

Report of the Workshop on Ensuring Access to Social Services of Under-served Populations

Bangkok, Thailand, 2–6 November 1998

I. Introduction

1. Ensuring access by all to basic social services was one of the key goals to which Governments committed themselves at the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen in 1995. It was recognized that good quality services, responding to the needs of users and delivered in an efficient and effective manner, were essential in order to improve the welfare of individuals, families and groups and to promote the quality of life and prosperity of societies.

2. While many and diverse efforts are being made to expand the range and coverage of services and while experimentation and innovation in their organization and delivery are not lacking, in order to improve quality and to ensure that services respond to real needs, the overall assessment must be that the systems currently existing in most places fail large numbers of people. Millions remain unreached or under-served by social services, whether considered in terms of the quantity or in terms of the quality and appropriateness of the services provided.

3. The Workshop examined the factors that account for the current unsatisfactory state of affairs. It reviewed the ways in which needs are perceived and assessed, services are conceived, planned and designed, resources are allocated and provision is organized, in order to analyse why current provision falls short and to identify possible new approaches for advancing towards the goals expressed at the Summit.

4. Apart from the familiar, ever-present factors of lack of resources or insufficient priority for social programmes within the distribution of available resources, perhaps the single most important factor is the failure to devise mechanisms and processes that can effectively reconcile and unite the often different and sometimes widely diverging interests of providers and potential users — that is, the lack of viable forms of partnership among all the concerned social actors, partnerships based on mutually agreed and accepted rights and responsibilities.

II. Social services and the “under-served”

The concept of the “under-served”

5. Traditionally, social services are conceptualized as services that add to the welfare of individuals and at the same time meet the needs of society for integration and development. The success of social services is, therefore, measured by the extent to which they are utilized to meet recognized individual and community requirements. Social services should be understood in a broad way. They include basic necessities such as nutrition, clean water, housing, sanitation, education, assistance in seeking employment, transport, security, and participation in cultural and social life. When organized by society, they also include benefits and services to people with needs arising from old age, incapacity to work, unemployment, death of a family breadwinner, raising a family, illness, maternity and other contingencies and problems.

6. Social services perform many functions. Some are preventive; others may be curative. Some are aimed at compensation, while still others cater to the development of persons, communities and society. Of course there are various national and cultural contexts, but in a general sense, to be under-served may be understood in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

7. Quantitative aspects of what it means to be under-served may include:

- (a) Receiving insufficient services, or no services at all;
- (b) Receiving services that do not meet desires or needs, including getting the wrong provision or service;
- (c) Receiving fewer services than others in similar situations;
- (d) Being excluded from services as a result of discrimination based on an attribute such as caste, class, age, gender, religion, region, ethnicity, physical or mental characteristics, social background (criminal record, drug use), political or sexual orientation, language, employment

status, occupation, family situation (such as single parenthood), poverty or inability to pay.

8. Qualitative aspects of what it means to be under-served may include:

(a) Receiving services that do not meet desired standards;

(b) Receiving services that are unacceptable to the user, advocacy groups or professionals;

(c) Receiving services that are of a lower quality than services received by others;

(d) Receiving services in an inappropriate fashion — for example, provided by an unskilled or untrained person.

9. Importantly, aspects of quality concern not only the delivery and receipt of services but also the way in which users are informed and included in decision-making, implementation, monitoring and the auditing of the services. It can also come in the form of empowering individuals and communities to stand on their own feet. It follows from this definition that it is not possible to identify or list definitive groups of people as always constituting the under-served. Moreover, in any society the group of under-served is likely to be heterogeneous in the sense that it will consist of different people with different needs and service requirements. Similarly, people may have similar needs but encounter unequal access and quality of services.

10. It should be noted, nevertheless, that certain groups tend to suffer the brunt of discrimination in many societies, and this would include being under-served in the provision of social services. Some of the groups that may be under-served include people living in poverty, women, older persons, children, migrants and refugees, and minorities, however defined. The composition of the under-served also changes over time. For example, women may often constitute a disproportionate share of the under-served, but this may not always be the case. In some societies, older persons will likely be under-served, whereas in others they may be quite well served. People living in poverty or who otherwise lack resources are most likely to be under-served. At the same time, the fact of being under-served may increase poverty for individuals and groups; in this regard, efforts to overcome problems of under-service will contribute to eradicating poverty.

How to identify the under-served

11. The notion of under-service must, quite clearly, be understood in relation to needs. Underlying the concept of

under-service is an assumption that equal distribution of services is desirable. In each situation, it is necessary to examine whether existing social services leave populations under-served. Unfortunately, the various measures typically used to make this assessment are not always reliable. If the measure is of inputs (such as how much is spent to provide services), the result may be unsatisfactory on two counts: first, because needs differ; and secondly, because actual outcomes are not necessarily proportional to inputs. If the measure focuses on outcomes, there are other difficulties, particularly because outcomes depend so much on individual circumstances and capacities. It would be wise to use a combination of measures, as available.

12. It is important to restate that the notion of what it means to be under-served is likely to vary within countries or regions, particularly at different levels of development. The demand for social services and the identification of who comprises the under-served populations will also differ, depending on contexts. While contexts themselves will vary in different countries, or even over time, it is useful to identify some of the major ones that may affect populations and their need or demand for social services:

(a) War and conflict often make it impossible to provide social services to large segments of a population. People may become victimized by such conflicts, and their need for services may be expected to increase as a result. For example, war or conflict may cause people to suffer serious injuries leading to disability. Natural disasters can have the same effect, although perhaps for shorter periods of time. They can be expected to increase the demand for social services, because, commonly, the welfare of people who suffer as a result becomes the responsibility of society;

(b) Sudden and sharp contraction of demand as a result of structural adjustment programmes can increase the need for social services while simultaneously reducing the resources available to provide them. Greater reliance on market mechanisms, as sometimes suggested, for the allocation of services such as education, health and old age pensions would likely leave larger populations under-served;

(c) Ageing populations and the accompanying change in morbidity patterns in several developing countries at low levels of per capita income make it very difficult to provide adequate curative services, with the danger that they would become a severely under-served population;

(d) The rapid onset of diseases, including HIV/AIDS, which kills economically active young adults, can suddenly create under-served populations of young children who are orphaned and old parents whose adult children have died;

(e) The capacity to collect resources for community purposes ("taxable capacity") differs among societies, and those poorer in that capacity may be unable to serve their populations adequately with social services. This is particularly true in countries with large numbers of people living in poverty. The phenomenon also occurs where constituent states in a federal system differ in their capacity to raise tax revenue and are not compensated by grants from the federal Government;

(f) The less vociferous, the worse organized and those more distant from centres of power are often among the under-served. While literacy is an important determinant of access to services, lack of literacy in the languages of administration can also define the under-served;

(g) Those denied political power because there is no democratically elected Government, because there are severe limits on the freedom of expression or because they belong to groups which have no access to power are invariably under-served with social services. Particular ethnic groups, castes and social classes are especially affected.

Determining the needs of the under-served

13. It is important to recognize that usually needs vary and change and that they are often defined without (or with little) regard to the wishes of the stipulated beneficiaries. In most cases, the needs that are expressed are in fact the objectives of the different actors responsible for service provision and not necessarily the actual needs of clients. Often, information which is aggregated at the national level and collected by third parties is used to set priorities, and it may not be detailed enough to differentiate the needs of specific groups. Within sectors, the process of deciding what needs should receive attention is left to professionals and bureaucrats, whose focus may be broad-based and generic rather than context-specific. This can result in services that are inappropriate to local needs. Allocation of resources to different service components and target populations may also be done exclusively by technocrats; this can result in services which are designed to meet professional criteria rather than the needs of potential beneficiaries. The process of deciding needs may reflect international goals, national political agendas, mandates of non-governmental organizations, and/or donor or private interests, rather than the desires of the immediate beneficiaries of the process. In spite of all the recent rhetoric about participation, when it comes to the actual provision of services, the beneficiaries are often only involved as passive recipients.

14. Social services are often provided without regard to the variety of different population groups, on the basic assumption that the needs of different population categories are homogenous. The organization and the delivery of services tend to be based on single models with uniform definitions of appropriate services. There may also be an assumption that the various population groups have equal capacity to demand and obtain access to social services. It may also be true that clients see their needs holistically, while providers tend to view them in a compartmentalized manner. The use of competing and conflicting models of service delivery by service providers is also common and may lead to confusion or cynicism on the part of potential beneficiaries.

15. There is a great deal of experimentation going on in service delivery. This has mostly been initiated by central agencies and is sometimes imposed on service providers. The result has often been to deprive the beneficiaries of any sense of ownership of the services. The emphasis is too often placed on convenience for service providers, and there is little flexibility in the mechanisms used to deliver services. The lack of flexibility means that services do not respond quickly enough to changing circumstances or individual needs, and this can create conditions in which populations are under-served. The under-served populations lack the political and technical power to influence either the types of services offered or the delivery mechanisms.

16. Provision of social services involves many stakeholders and targeted individuals or groups. It is not easy to determine a single method for setting priorities or for establishing standards of quality, effectiveness or efficiency. Various perspectives should be encouraged and entertained.

17. Since there are a large number of stakeholders involved in the provision of social services, it is imperative that all of the perspectives be recognized. In particular, the perspectives of populations that are currently under-served should be given priority. Their equal, active and full participation in the processes of planning, implementing, evaluating and monitoring of social services should be facilitated. Through such a client-oriented perspective, a close examination of the current state of the social services will reveal issues such as the criteria for their organization, delivery, and assessment.

18. It is very important to establish criteria for identifying the prospective users and the types of services to be delivered. It is equally important to ensure that the criteria be decided by all stakeholders together and in partnership with the users and that they be made transparent.

Barriers to access to social services

19. Among the numerous factors that may cause populations to be under-served with regard to the provision of social services include and which may vary from place to place and from time to time, the following have appeared in many contexts:

(a) Political barriers, including lack of representation in local and national government. Council members may not be democratically elected or representative of all groups; certain groups, including women and youth, may be consciously excluded;

(b) Legal barriers and procedural obstacles and restrictions, such as laws that do not guarantee land title for specific groups (such as indigenous people or women); laws that restrict harm-reduction activities (such as working with people suffering from HIV/AIDS); law enforcement officers who are not sensitized to social service approaches and works;

(c) Physical barriers, including remoteness, may mean that the facilities are located in places where access is difficult, thus discouraging use;

(d) The attitudes, or "world view", of professionals, whose ideas, conceptions and assumptions may affect the provision of social services. With reference to indigenous people, for example, service providers may adopt the notion of the "noble savage" — the view that indigenous people are exotic and mysterious and that their cultures are somehow akin to museum artifacts which need to be preserved regardless of their own perceptions or interests. Such a view may lead providers to view indigenous people as inanimate objects and to make decisions without regard to their views;

(e) Problems in maintaining professionalism among governmental officers and social workers, or a sense of "burn-out" among workers. In many countries, social work is under-valued, resulting in low pay and poor working conditions which can demotivate workers; hence there is often burn-out and high turnover among social workers;

(f) Social stigmas, particularly for individuals or groups that have been engaged in illegal or criminal activity or that have existed on the "margins" of society. Such individuals may find it extremely difficult to take advantage of social services to become reintegrated into society;

(g) Nationalist sentiment, leading to a devaluing of imported techniques or practices, may hinder both providers and recipients from adopting potentially useful ideas and programmes.

20. Delivery systems that are too complex and sophisticated may prove too difficult for beneficiaries to access, resulting in a failure of acceptance and use. Delivery systems can be made more easily accessible to users in at least two ways. First, obstacles or barriers (including political, legal, bureaucratic, physical, financial, social and informational) should be reduced. Secondly, the efficiency of the delivery system itself should be continually improved.

III. Enhancing service delivery

The current state of quality in social services

21. Currently, the users of social services generally have little influence over the types of services provided or how they are delivered. The approach commonly adopted is one in which service providers and governmental officials decide types of services and quality standards. This can create a lack of communication which results in an information gap between the providers of services and the users of those services. Service quality can best be assessed by the beneficiaries of the services. This applies to all sectors of social service.

22. Many social services fail to respond adequately to the needs of the users, because providers often do not adopt a client-focused approach. The result may be a situation whereby social service provision misses its target groups altogether or fails to provide the quality needed. Incorporating the client's point of view in the planning and delivery of social services will contribute significantly to the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of those services.

23. Services may be of poor quality for a number of reasons. On one hand, provision may be inflexible, and services may fail to keep up with changing social or economic conditions, thus no longer meeting the evolving needs of users. On the other hand, political or administrative considerations may bring about change which is inappropriate to user needs. Sometimes service provision changes with each new administration — or even with each new director. This can lead to inconsistencies in provision and confusion about how to obtain access to services, and it is the users who suffer. It is essential to monitor and evaluate service provision and to incorporate innovations based on appropriate feedback, while avoiding inconsistency and change for its own sake.

Improving the quality of social services

24. It is important to establish standards for measuring service quality. To do this, criteria ought to be established for evaluating social services. These standards should be based on a common understanding of needs and desirable outcomes, as developed by clients, service providers and governmental officials working together. There is also a need for systematic evaluation of services, based on continuous feedback provided by both the providers and the users of services.

25. A more formal mechanism for auditing service delivery should be established in order to maintain standards of quality. The body given responsibility for auditing should be formed of experts nominated and agreed by all stakeholders of the process. It should act in a neutral, objective way. It should attempt to improve the accountability of both governments and service providers. Accountability should refer not only to financial considerations but also to programme standards. This should result in improved satisfaction of the needs of clients as well as the capacities of service providers. In the context of auditing exercises, it would be useful to encourage participatory research activities aiming to improve the acquisition and sharing of information and to facilitate the planning of social services and the development of new and more appropriate programmes.

26. The organization of social services has implications for the efficient allocation and use of resources. A well-organized social service system also contributes to higher degrees of effectiveness and thus legitimacy and acceptance, not only by recipients but also by professionals and contributors. The ease with which people understand how the system operates will help determine how well they are able to obtain access to services.

27. A well organized system should also be able to respond effectively to the needs of users with multiple problems. Many countries operate segmented systems of social services, with specific agencies maintaining responsibility for particular risks and needs. This often leads to inefficiency and inflexible resource allocation, as some needs, regions and levels of social service delivery are inadequately served or under-funded. At the same time, other regions may experience redundancy in the provision of services.

28. In practice, some countries have benefited from introducing the "one-shop" principle, which organizes various types of social services in one centrally located place. This may typically be in the local town hall, where

other public service functions, such as the tax authorities and local planning agencies, are located. If people can go to a place not immediately identified as a social service agency, visits may be encouraged and social stigma reduced, because the embarrassment sometimes associated with reliance on social services is eliminated. When combined with more transparency and ease of understanding the system, the "take-up" of social services is enhanced. One-shop organization may also provide a means for service providers to obtain information and feedback from beneficiaries, thus helping those professionals to develop longer-term and holistic perspectives concerning users, their needs and problems, and the ways they may best be accommodated. It also provides an excellent entry point for collecting essential information which can be used to evaluate potential demand, plan the provision of services and make adjustments in services according to changing needs.

29. There are often problems associated with dealing effectively with people having multiple problems or needs. The same is true for people whose problems may not be easily or readily defined. An example of the former are homeless schizophrenic drug addicts, who often find themselves being shifted from one agency to another. Each agency may claim that before it can respond properly to the specific problem for which it has competence, the client must get the other problems solved. However, social problems and needs often come in intricate packages which require close cooperation between several agencies. Having one-shop social service centres at the local level may reduce the possibilities that these people will be under-served.

30. Relatives of people with needs are often invisible to the system, since they themselves are rarely eligible for assistance. In particular, children are often neglected, for they seldom command the experience or ability needed to navigate complicated social services bureaucracies nor do they possess the language skills needed to access them. One way to overcome this problem is to open social service centres to all and to train personnel to recognize needs in a more holistic way. This would include consideration of the family situations of potential clients. Personnel should also be trained to talk with and consider the perspectives of relatives of clients, including children.

31. Many countries are experimenting with how to organize social services so that fewer people actually remain recipients of services. Besides a unitary, one-shop, organization, some countries are implementing so-called individual action plans. These plans are set up through a collaborative effort of the social worker and the client, and they are designed to set out the rights and obligations of the user over a given time span. The idea is to spell out what

actions should be taken by the individual concerned and what action should be taken by the agency. Individual action plans thus set out both rights and obligations. Typically, an action plan describes the type and sequencing of services to be provided, such as education, training, and perhaps employment opportunities. Engaging users through their active participation in the formulation of action plans is seen as key for maintaining the quality of services and for enhancing the users' sense of participation, empowerment and, ultimately, self-reliance.

The importance of civil society

32. Provision of social services has been a long-standing activity of the non-governmental sector. Many useful services which are now funded or provided by government and regarded as essential parts of service delivery in many countries were initially conceived and introduced by non-governmental organizations. These include different forms of child care, home care for frail and older people, respite facilities for care givers, and assistance to people who are unemployed.

33. In the overall equation of social service provision, side-by-side with a multitude of community-based efforts, non-governmental organizations play an important role in many countries. While the nature or extent of the voluntary component in these organizations varies substantially — and they typically combine both volunteers and salaried staff and participation — the driving force behind the non-governmental organization is usually a concern for the well-being of its members and partners, and not the material interests of service providers.

34. Non-governmental organizations have also been advocates on behalf of under-served people and their unmet needs, pointing out to governments the need for greater action in the delivery of social services and acting as catalysts for action. The adequacy and effectiveness of social services is highly dependent on innovation and advocacy activities by the non-governmental organizations. As many non-governmental organizations have become more dependent on government funding, and with the conditions of funding often quite prescriptive, there is a danger that much innovation and advocacy will be undermined. It is therefore important that governments recognize, respect and support innovation and advocacy by the organizations of civil society.

35. At the same time, it is important that non-governmental organizations be held accountable and that they maintain the same standards of quality as public or private for-profit

service providers. Irrespective of the motivations of the providers, all clients of services deserve to be served in a manner commensurate with their needs and at a comparable level and quality of service. It is appropriate for non-governmental organizations that receive public funds or are sub-contracted by the State to provide services to be under some form of governmental supervision. It would also be advisable for all non-governmental organizations to submit their activities to monitoring, through appropriate, mutually agreed mechanisms designed to ensure high standards, at least a minimum of coordination, and some rationality in the range of services offered by all providers.

IV. Building partnerships

36. The growth of partnerships among all the actors concerned with social services is a major new development, essential for enhancing service delivery. Partnerships are important for the provision of services generally and were recognized as such at the World Summit for Social Development. In the context of this workshop, the issue of partnerships for the benefit of the under-served populations will be considered.

37. Action to meet the needs of under-served populations should be promoted by national Governments, which have primary responsibility to ensure that basic services are available to all. The importance of governmental commitment to providing social services and the extent to which they can influence outcomes are demonstrated by the fact that countries of similar economic capacity have managed to provide very different levels of service. While Governments will have primary responsibility for ensuring that services are provided, this does not mean that they will be primarily responsible for service provision or that decisions about how services are delivered should be theirs alone. Decisions about service provision must be made with the full involvement of all stakeholders, with particular emphasis on users and local communities.

38. There is also a need to ensure that the formulation, implementation and follow-up processes of national social services policies and programmes are accorded commitment from the highest political levels, taking into account the national priorities and realities arising from different socio-economic and cultural development contexts. Action by national Governments may also need to be augmented by international support.

39. In order to address the diverse and changing needs of the under-served populations, there is a need for true

partnership among the various actors providing social services. It may be considered that effective partnership exists when the following elements are in place:

- (a) Shared goals;
- (b) A sense of equality among the partners;
- (c) Mutual acceptance of divergent views;
- (d) Joint decision-making;
- (e) Joint "ownership" of the process and its outcomes.

40. The partners to be involved should include all the actors concerned with service provision as well as all the stakeholders involved in that provision, including the under-served populations. There should be an attempt to form consensus on the establishment and definition of needs, on the mechanisms for intervention, and on the process for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the outcomes.

41. Strengthening responsible, equal and full partnership between all key stakeholders can be achieved through institutionalized and recognized formal mechanisms or platforms. Such mechanisms should ensure genuine partnership, especially in decision-making processes, in order to create synergies to better address the issues on social services. Some countries have established consultative councils at the national and provincial levels through which the Government and other stakeholders meet on a regular basis to formulate social service policies and programmes. All countries are encouraged to establish such mechanisms.

42. Every effort should be made to facilitate the participation of under-served populations in decision-making processes. As has already been stated, this will help to improve services. But more importantly, because most people consider basic social services to be essential to their well-being, it is relatively easy to encourage them to become involved in their planning and delivery. Most people understand the need for services and are willing to participate in their organization. Thus, planning and delivering social services can become a means for engaging people, for facilitating their participation in society, and ultimately, for leading to their greater empowerment.

43. The adoption of approaches that integrate the provision of different social services into one programme is also to be encouraged, especially in order to improve the provision of services to populations currently under-served.

Coordination

44. Currently, there is often no coordination among the various actors responsible for service delivery, and the result is seen in competition for clients and financing, service duplication, and squandering of resources. Better coordination is called for, with regard to sharing information, planning activities, implementing services and sharing lessons learnt. It is important for various sectors to agree and define their respective roles and, in particular, the critical role of government. There is also a need to consider international agreements and commitments in the context of local conditions.

45. Often coordination is lacking in both horizontal and vertical dimensions, which results in wasteful competition for resources and attention, duplication of efforts, inefficiencies and, ultimately, under-service to many clients. On the horizontal dimension, this may be seen in the practice of shifting users from one agency to another in order to cut costs (by, for instance, cutting case loads at a particular agency). Or the goal may be to give the appearance of increased productivity (by, for instance, "skimming" clients whose problems are easily resolved in order to obtain a higher degree of "successful cases"). But cutbacks sometimes may result in increased costs. One agency's savings may simply be shifted to another agency, and ultimately, both individuals and society may lose out in this shifting of clients and costs. Within agencies dealing with multiple needs, there are examples of similar practices, often made in response to the availability of funding rather than client need.

46. The vertical dimension concerns the level of social services available to a given client. In this context as well, there are examples of agencies shifting clients and costs back and forth. Long-term care of frail elderly persons provides a case in point. Sometimes regional authorities have tried to release older patients from hospitals and refer them to social care at the local level, while at the same time, local authorities try to push them in the other direction. Both regional and local authorities are in this way thinking of the well-being of their programmes or agencies rather than the welfare of the elderly clients. Such a situation demands better coordination and the thoughtful design of programme and resource allocation across different levels of service provision.

47. Coordination of social services is particularly important as far as the under-served population is concerned. Their needs are often multiple, as are the disadvantages they suffer. Even in societies with well developed social services,

users frequently fall through the gaps. A good service system is one that ensures that the work of different agencies is coordinated properly at various levels (societal, local and case).

48. Many under-served people live in deprived neighbourhoods. Some live in shanty towns or have no fixed abode. Community-based agencies operating integrated service teams are often effective in helping hard-to-reach people. The homeless often respond better to workers from community-based or non-governmental organizations than to workers from state agencies. However, after initial contacts and motivation to get help have been built up, it is inevitable that the under-served must gain entry to the state service system. Non-governmental organizations should work continuously with public agencies to monitor whether the referred persons are helped.

49. Rural communities tend to be neglected by service systems, resulting in under-provision and poor quality programmes. Urban bias runs deep, and it is unrealistic to expect redress in the near future. Nevertheless, Governments must recognize urban bias as a sort of discrimination and commit themselves to allocating more resources to rural social development. Relying on state aid alone is too passive. Rural communities must be galvanized to engage in self-help and mutual help endeavours.

Requirements for information

50. Information represents both an enabling factor and an instrument to re-engineer the organization and delivery of essential social services for all. As an enabling factor, information can both engage and empower under-served populations to obtain service coverage, to access services and to use essential services to improve levels of living and livelihoods. Information also provides clients with an instrument to re-engineer services, so that they respond more effectively to actual needs and are delivered in an efficient and effective manner.

51. Often, there is a lack of communication or sharing of information between professionals and other service providers, on the one hand, and clients or user communities, on the other. This can result in a failure to recognize the knowledge, skills and abilities of people to define their own needs, and ignores whatever efforts they may have already undertaken to solve their problems. It is also likely to result in the design of programmes that are inappropriate or unwanted, leading to lack of participation, poor results and under-service for large segments of the population. The

question of whose knowledge and information shape service delivery must be addressed.

52. Information as an instrument for re-engineering service design and provision involves dialogue on the mission of service providers, the needs of clients, and the means of improving the range and delivery of essential services. Information that is to serve as both an enabling factor and re-engineering tool must be accessible to all people. In the first instance, information must convey clear and distinct messages and be sensitive to local traditions and values. Information must also be accessible to all people, including persons with physical and sensorial disabilities.

53. Acquiring information is the first step to securing access to social services. Blockages to the free flow of information should be removed where they exist. Information regarding social services should be easy to understand, and displayed or distributed in places where people live, work or congregate. Pictures, cartoons and personal explanations are effective in reaching children, older persons, the illiterate and poorly educated persons. Disseminating information in service centres has advantages: it allows for inspection of programmes, facilitates deeper explanation and individual follow-through, and enhances user confidence. It also has disadvantages, particularly if the location is inconvenient or if it creates costs of access or encourages staff inertia.

54. Multiple channels of information should be created. Service information can be provided via Web sites, mobile stations, public education campaigns, telephone hotlines, and the media. Pamphlets can be passed out in community agencies, government departments, public transport stations and specially established information counters. Citizens' advice bureaus, referral agencies and welfare rights organizations are also effective in easing access and ensuring fair treatment of the under-served, especially people who lack the skills to negotiate complex bureaucratic systems and people suffering from social stigma who would otherwise lack the confidence to assert their rights.

55. Information technology is a powerful tool. It can be particularly useful to disabled and home-bound people. Availability, however, is often restricted by the high costs entailed. Many people, especially the under-privileged, lack the necessary money, equipment, education and knowledge to access electronic information. It is often expensive to set up and maintain information technology systems; this is also true for training the staff needed to operate them.

56. Public agencies must devote more resources to spreading the use of information technology as a service-facilitating device. Communal facilities can be set up in

public libraries, neighbourhood agencies, places of worship, schools, community centres, and government offices to allow people to have access to such information, preferably with the help of staff or volunteers. Information technology has become increasingly important, and its importance can be expected to increase over time. If the populations that are already under-served are denied its use, or they are in danger of falling yet further behind the general population.

57. Radio and especially television transmission is proving highly effective in spreading information about services and bringing awareness to people. For example, information about good practices regarding health care and preventive medicine may be widely disseminated — even to remote communities — through radio and television broadcasts. There are important opportunities for partnership and close collaboration between government and the media, public and private, in providing information and promoting better practices.

58. The media should be encouraged to take a more active role in reaching out to under-served populations. Improved technologies and decreasing costs of transmission make it possible to reach people who may be illiterate or speak minority languages and dialects. Distance learning and distance diagnostics, linked to computerized databases, are also making it possible to bring high quality services to remote communities at costs that are a fraction of those typically associated with the conventional network of schools, clinics and medical specialists.

Rights and responsibilities

59. Efforts to extend access to basic services for the under-served must be linked to issues of governance and rights. Without the political will to provide services in an inclusive way, the prospects for reaching the under-served will remain severely limited. Political will, in turn, is more likely to be present in contexts where Governments are committed to upholding people's rights.

60. Three types of rights are of particular importance in relation to services. These are the right to inclusion, the right to participation, and the right to accountability. All citizens are holders of rights in equal measure and therefore have equal rights to basic services and to social protection. Similarly, all citizens have the right to participate in public decision-making that affects their well-being or their opportunities to develop. They also have the right to call providers to account for the type and quality of services they use and for which they pay, directly or indirectly.

61. Rights, however, carry responsibilities. In demanding inclusion, citizens must be willing to include others; in demanding participation, they must also be willing to contribute; and in demanding accountability, they must be willing to use services responsibly and in ways that do not deny others their rights to use them too. Appropriate consideration of the rights and responsibilities of resident non-citizens must also be included, in their interest and that of the host community at large.

62. Adopting a rights-based approach marks an important step in ensuring social services for all, and has a direct bearing on central issues of governance and on the institutional arrangements through which services are provided. An appreciation for people's rights also encourages service providers to seek the knowledge required to understand and respond to the varying needs of different groups within society and hence reduce the likelihood that the needs of some groups will be overlooked. It will not change the reality, however, that services are often provided in circumstances of severe resource constraint. A rights-based approach does not mean that people can expect to receive everything at once. It does mean, however, that they can expect to be involved actively in the processes through which difficult decisions are made with regard to rationing and resource allocation and through which quality control is managed.

63. In implementing a rights-based approach, some mechanism should also be established to allow people to appeal decisions and seek redress of grievances. For example, some countries and localities have established offices or systems of ombudsmen.

64. A focus on rights and governance does not provide a panacea but is critical in helping to create the conditions under which services can genuinely be made available to all and in helping to support inclusive processes which should accelerate progress towards the achievement of that goal.

V. Resources and financing

65. Many different actors contribute to the provision of social services, each bringing a particular mix of resources to the task, including resources in kind, in time, in skills and knowledge, in organizational and administrative capacity, and in finance. The provision of adequate services, and particularly their expansion to under-served populations, in terms of both quantity and quality of services, requires appropriate resource mobilization and allocation — in most

cases this means more resources — as well as improved use and coordination of the resources available.

66. Resources are augmented by their efficient usage. Allocative efficiency could be improved by redefining the roles, rules and incentives applicable to the various players within the system, enhancing the involvement of a variety of service providers, increasing a focus on outcomes rather than inputs as a means of allocating resources, and enabling greater user participation in the definition and evaluation of the services provided.

67. A critical element is the availability of public resources to finance and support publicly provided services and to stimulate and complement private and voluntary provision, as appropriate, and their more effective and efficient use to meet stated objectives.

68. A comparison of countries with similar levels of public spending on particular services shows vast differences in terms of the results obtained. Similarly, countries at comparable levels of income allocate very different amounts to publicly provided or supported services, which also translates into very different outcomes in terms of social indicators.

69. The current state of affairs in the provision of social services across the board thus suggests that there is vast scope for improvement in the allocative efficiency of current expenditures within the public sector and a need to increase the overall amount of public resources dedicated to these activities in many countries.

70. The pool of public resources may be enlarged in various ways, through the imposition, for example, of user fees and co-payments for services, obligatory — and typically earmarked — contributions such as payroll or social security taxes, and through various forms of public borrowing, such as the issuance of bonds and other financial instruments.

71. While recognizing the contribution that these different financing modalities can make to enlarge the pool of resources available to finance social services, a strong preference was expressed for financing publicly provided social services largely from national general revenues, for reasons of both equity and efficiency.

72. To expand such revenues, several proposals were advanced. Broadening the tax base was seen as particularly important. This could frequently be achieved by increasing the share of direct taxes in the overall revenue mix. Improved tax administration, important particularly in many developing countries, could be sought, *inter alia*, by

collecting taxes at the source and doing so at frequent intervals, and reducing tax exemptions and rebates.

73. Tax exemptions and other concessions are, in effect, expenditures. They constitute what can be called the invisible welfare state, although they are rarely acknowledged as such or monitored in the same way as direct public expenditures. This raises issues of efficiency and equity of tax benefits which at the moment are not addressed in most countries. It is recommended that these expenditures be reported and discussed on the same basis and in line with other expenditures to ensure transparency in the setting of national priorities and in assessing the benefits and burdens on different groups of the population.

74. In recent years various countries have experimented with differing forms of privatized services or benefits, seeking to transfer responsibility from state to private provision, and have mobilized funds privately as opposed to publicly. In considering the respective merits of the alternatives and to make a full appraisal of their cost-effectiveness, account must be taken of the cost of tax concessions enjoyed by the private alternatives.

Training for effectiveness and efficiency

75. Discussions of the quality and effectiveness of service provision often neglect the important question of adequate and appropriate staff training. An even more neglected aspect is the question of working conditions and the impact they have on staff motivation. This has implications not just for ensuring the quality of services but also for the degree to which providers will be willing to participate in discussions with actual and potential users on all aspects of what services are offered and how they are administered and delivered. The link between staff training, motivation and working conditions needs to be stressed. Trained staff are better motivated; trained staff who enjoy reasonable working conditions are motivated even more. It has been clearly shown that improved motivation and greater effectiveness go hand-in-hand. While training requires the expenditure of resources, it represents a prudent investment with a significant return. It is important that training be extended also to people staffing non-governmental organizations, including volunteers. At the same time, flexibility in recruitment is required, stressing actual skills rather than rigidly insisting on formal educational qualifications.

VI. International factors and external influences

76. The Social Summit gave due prominence to the external environment and the diverse ways in which it shapes possibilities for social development at the national and local levels. The Workshop recognized that external influences also affect the provision and capacity of supporting social services. It considered, briefly, two: globalization, and the flow of ideas.

77. Globalization, increased mobility of capital, the rapid development of footloose industries and sharpened international competition have affected the range of services and the choices in respect to sources of revenue to finance them. The danger of downward harmonization of social services was noted, as countries try to avoid imposing tax burdens on capital and industries which might flee otherwise to locations offering tax incentives. A similar phenomenon, mentioned above, also affects the capacity of localities within countries to raise needed revenue, which in turn curtails their ability to offer the services that local circumstances might warrant.

78. In an era of globalization, goods and capital are becoming increasingly mobile while labour (that is, people) and land remain significantly less mobile. In tandem with technological advances, these mobile factors are likely to become still more mobile, and tax evasion may grow. One example is trade via the Internet, which to some extent bypasses national regulation concerning the collection of revenue. For this reason, national tax systems may have to be reformed so as to adapt to a changing world. One possibility is to introduce or increase taxation on land and luxury housing or other immobile assets. While this may not be a popular measure, particularly as it is likely to affect the more advantaged and, therefore, vociferous groups in society, it may continue to give Governments the possibility to raise revenue to support improved social services.

79. To the extent that globalization has enabled some countries to attract external investment leading to accelerated economic growth and thus an expanded revenue base, it has had a potentially positive impact on social provision. It is clear, however, that the international financial crisis of the past 12 months is having a negative impact in many countries, particularly with regard to their capacity to support social services, and is thus immensely complicating the task of expanding services and improving their quality.

80. The flow of ideas globally and the exchange of experience among countries are other forms of external

influence. It was noted that there were two opposite tendencies in the social domain. One was to reject everything that was foreign, on the reasoning that each country's situation was unique and that external influences tended to be irrelevant at best or to undermine local uniqueness and cultural identity at worst. In the other, foreign ideas were espoused and adopted without due attention to their appropriateness. Both these extremes should be avoided. While the Workshop did not discuss this issue in any detail, the clear message was that learning from the experience of others had an important role in the development of policy and that external influences, if properly evaluated, could encourage valuable, and needed, innovation.

81. The experiences of different countries, in terms of policy making, planning and implementation of the provision and resourcing of social services, should be shared through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including in the form of regional and international forums, seminars and workshops. These exchanges should, however, recognize the reality of each country and should not be dominated by a single approach or perspective.

82. The planning and implementation of social service activities have been and continue to be influenced by factors which are sometimes outside the control of the individual countries, communities and individuals affected or involved. Ongoing civil and international conflicts, financial crises and natural disasters around the world (including volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, tidal waves and floods) have had severe impacts on the efficacy and efficiency in the delivery of social services. These situations challenge the capacity of the affected countries to ensure sustained delivery of basic social services for all, especially to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

83. Globalization is a fact of life. It should be based on genuine cooperation and partnership among and within countries, reflecting the principles of equality and justice in the development, management and consumption of the world's resources. At present, neo-liberal policies, which have so far mostly benefited those individuals, groups and societies that are already wealthy or advantaged rather than — and sometimes at the expense of — the poor, vulnerable, disadvantaged, and under-served, have dominated the discourse on globalization. This situation directly affects the provisioning and resourcing of social services especially, but not exclusively, in the developing countries.

* * *

84. It has now been three-and-a-half years since Heads of State and Government met at Copenhagen at the World

Summit for Social Development. The commitments they made there and the programme of action they adopted to achieve those commitments provide the best statement ever made of global priorities for social action. Social progress and social development are long-term propositions, and while it would perhaps be too optimistic to think that significant results might already have been achieved, what is important is that global awareness, concern and momentum be maintained and that they be turned into effective actions at all levels by all social actors. In doing this, it is essential that the role and contribution of social service provision be carefully considered so that improvements can be continually introduced. Considering the issue of service provision in terms of populations which are under-served may promote improved services, because it promotes closer analysis of those services and their efficiency and effectiveness. The Commission for Social Development has recognized the importance of social services for all and is encouraged to continue to give priority attention to this subject.

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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development:
priority themes****Expert Workshop on Innovations in the Delivery and
Financing of Social Services****Note by the Secretary-General**

1. In its resolution 1996/7 of 22 July 1996, the Economic and Social Council decided on the substantive items of the agenda for the Commission for Social Development for its future sessions and on a multi-year programme of work for the consideration of priority subjects. The Commission discussed strategies and actions for the eradication of poverty at its special session of 1996; it considered productive employment and sustainable livelihoods at its thirty-fifth session in 1997. In 1998, at its thirty-sixth session, the Commission gave attention to promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons. The priority themes for the thirty-seventh session of the Commission in 1999 will be social services for all and an initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

2. In its resolution 1995/60 of 28 July 1995, the Economic and Social Council decided that the Commission for Social Development should establish the practice of opening its debates to experts and the main actors of civil society so as to enhance the exchange of information and experience, knowledge and understanding of social

development. Furthermore, in its resolution 1996/7, the Council reaffirmed the need for ensuring an effective partnership and cooperation between Governments and the relevant actors of civil society, the social partners and the major groups¹ as defined in Agenda 21,² including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, in the implementation of and follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development³ and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development,⁴ and for ensuring their involvement in the planning, elaboration, implementation and evaluation of social policies at the national level.

3. Accordingly, in preparing for the thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development and in response to the expressed intentions of the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Secretariat organized an expert workshop on innovations in the delivery and financing of social services, held at United Nations Headquarters from 13 to 16 October 1998. The expert workshop brought together experts from all world regions and observers from the United Nations system and civil society.

4. The report of the expert workshop is annexed below.

* E/CN.5/1999/1.



Notes

¹ In addition to the social partners (representatives of trade unions and of business and industry), the other major groups identified in Agenda 21 are women, children and youth, indigenous people, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, the scientific and technological community, and farmers.

² *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution I, annex II.

³ *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution I, annex I.

⁴ *Ibid.*, annex II.

Annex

**Final report of the Expert Workshop on Innovations in the
Delivery and Financing of Social Services, United Nations
Headquarters, New York, 13–16 October 1998**

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I. Background, framework and goals

1. At the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, Governments committed themselves to implementing far-reaching programmes of social development to improve the lives of people in all parts of the globe. Among these commitments was a commitment to strive towards ensuring access by all people to basic social services. Some three years on, it is only too evident that progress towards this goal has been at best modest. Although efforts have been stepped up here and additional resources allocated there, and new initiatives taken in many places — at various levels and involving different actors — the overall situation with respect to the availability and quality of social services has changed little. Indeed, it has regressed visibly in specific ways. This will be clearly demonstrated when the results of the comprehensive effort currently being conducted by the United Nations system to assess progress in meeting the Copenhagen goals for basic needs and services are completed and analysed.

2. The principal factors behind this lack of progress at a global level and regress in specific areas or sectors are briefly summarized below. It is recognized that a number of recent global developments have made it more difficult for Governments to deliver on their commitments; but there have also been internal failures to rise to challenges, old and new.

3. While recognizing shortcomings and failures, it is important not to overlook the specific, positive initiatives being undertaken in the spirit of the Copenhagen commitments. Such positive initiatives may be summarized under three headings:

4. **Participation by users of services in deciding what is provided and how:** From a concept that at the time of the World Summit was not widely or well understood, this is rapidly developing into a major force driving the reform, planning, funding and delivery of services.

5. **Resource mobilization and allocation:** There is a new understanding of the multidimensional nature of the resources that must be mobilized to meet basic needs and support the expansion and maintenance of quality social services. Thus, it is now recognized that resources comprise, in addition to the critical financial resources available to public authorities, also those of the private business or corporate sector, and those of the not-for-profit and voluntary sector; furthermore, resources are understood to mean not just cash, but also resources in kind, in the time and effort people devote to meeting their needs, and in organizational capacity. Finally, resources must include the

skills, knowledge and capacities of the people for whom services are organized, including those of family networks, communities and locally based organizations.

6. **Information:** It has come to be recognized with particular force in the past three years that the availability of and access to basic information for all citizens is essential to ensure both their effective participation in all areas of national life and their ability to take full advantage of available social services.

II. New challenges and conditions

7. The heads of State or Government who met at Copenhagen were eloquent in their depiction of current global social conditions and courageous in setting out their commitment to addressing those conditions. It is certainly not our intention here to revisit or reinvent the analysis or the prescriptions set down at the World Summit. In the intervening years, however, certain trends may have become more pronounced, and we feel it imperative to draw attention to them here. At the same time, and because it is the task of the Commission for Social Development to encourage widespread implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development,^a we offer some ideas and suggestions for the Commission's consideration.

8. In a review of recent changes, it is perhaps most important to note that the biggest problem is the fact that many problems have not changed. Poverty, unemployment and social disparities — the issues addressed at Copenhagen — continue to plague all societies. The basic truth — that if they are not addressed urgently they could have catastrophic effects in a number of ways — has also not changed. Yet several factors have changed and others, which pose major challenges for the provision of social services, and by extension for the financing of such services, have emerged and will intensify over the first decades of the new millennium. These factors are summarized below.

9. Population growth and **rapid urbanization** will continue into the new century. By far the greatest part of this population increase and urban growth will occur in the cities of the developing countries. This means that these cities — which are already characterized by severe overcrowding, poor planning, lack of adequate physical infrastructure and social services, extreme poverty and environmental degradation — face the daunting task of having to provide, within a 30- to 40-year period, housing, urban infrastructure, social facilities and services, and jobs to accommodate new

populations which will be equal to or exceed their existing populations.

10. **Population ageing:** One of the emerging challenges for which social responses will be required is the ageing of populations. More people are living into old age and spending more years than ever before in old age. This has important consequences for the types of social provisioning and the patterns of resource mobilization that will be required to meet the service needs of ageing populations. In many developed countries, which have longer experience with ageing populations, one of the service dilemmas is how to continue to provide the critically needed services for older persons without creating or exacerbating intergenerational inequity. In the developing countries, where rapid rates of population ageing are occurring at the same time that social support is still mostly provided by extended families, such support — where it still exists — is becoming increasingly unreliable and inadequate; where no formal social safety nets exist for older persons, the challenge becomes to determine what basic services need to be provided to those older persons who have no children or whose children lack resources to provide care, and how best to provide that care. A further challenge will be to meet the service needs of older women in these societies — women who for their entire lives have been denied access to opportunities for building capital or saving and who now confront the triple jeopardy of old age, gender and poverty.

11. **Epidemiological profile:** As societies develop and populations age, the nature of the diseases that affect them also changes. The experience of the industrialized countries shows that demographic transition — from high fertility and high mortality to low fertility and low mortality — is usually accompanied by a health transition, whereby the regime of diseases undergoes a radical change. The old regime of mass infectious diseases, which afflict mainly children and the underprivileged, is replaced by a new regime of diseases (such as heart disease and cancer) and other health-related problems (violence), which afflict mainly the aged and both the poor and the better-off segments of society. The new regime of diseases is typically much more expensive to deal with than the old, but fortunately for most industrialized countries the new regime emerged only after they had become economically prosperous. This is not the case for the middle-income countries of the modern world. In these countries, the demographic transition has been telescoped within a few decades, and one consequence is that they are now facing an overlapping health transition problem, that is to say, the new regime of diseases has emerged while the old regime is still going strong. These countries are thus having to deal with two regimes at the same time, and at a

level of economic development that is much lower than the level achieved by countries of the Western world when the new regime emerged among them. All this makes providing adequate health services in these countries much more challenging than anything previously experienced.

12. **New technologies:** In general, the introduction of new technologies can have positive effects on economic productivity and provides greater convenience for large numbers of people. The use of technology can substantially increase the range and scope of social service provision, even as it reduces costs for service delivery. It is important to note, however, that technologies are likely to have a wide variety of impacts on societies. Workers will be required to obtain continuous training in new techniques as technologies proliferate. Greater productivity and effectiveness promise greatly increased benefits for societies. How these benefits are distributed will become increasingly important to overall social well-being; this will be particularly true in cases where some segments of the population succeed through application of new technologies at the same time as others fall behind. Increased unemployment may occur in some sectors or regions, and the ill effects of unemployment on sustainable development in the global context were fully recognized at Copenhagen. Since then, however, the speed at which new technologies develop has accelerated, and it can be expected that this trend will continue in the foreseeable future.

13. **Globalization** puts pressure on many countries, particularly developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as they struggle to keep public finances under strict control in the face of increased competition in respect of the flow of goods and capital; it can also increase expectations and levels of impatience among under-served populations.

14. This has been demonstrated vividly by the recent global financial crisis. In an era of rapid globalization, a financial crisis in one country is no longer the crisis of that country alone. As recently demonstrated in the instances of East Asia, the Russian Federation and Latin America, what was initially a localized financial crisis quickly proved to be contagious as international investor confidence melted. The result was that many developing economies became engulfed and the entire global economy was threatened. The severity of the current financial crisis raises an important issue captured by the metaphor of the double-edged sword: the crisis is likely to diminish sources of financing for social services at the same time that it generates new and perhaps previously unrecognized needs.

15. The increased communications and rapid opening of world markets inherent in globalization have resulted in growing awareness among consumers of the different living standards and general welfare enjoyed by people of similar socio-economic strata elsewhere. This is particularly true in developing countries. Global television, cinema and other media expose diverse populations to the standards that prevail in other countries, and it is then natural for these populations to demand similar standards. The social sector is particularly affected. People can see levels of service in health and education that they once associated only with the very rich; they then begin to question this and demand to know why they cannot obtain the same standards. Not only does globalization expose people to the disparities in standards of living among peoples and countries, but it can also contribute to changing the balance of those disparities, as some societies benefit from its effects while others languish. For many developing countries, globalization, increased competition and the consequent financial constraints make it more difficult not only to raise well-being to the levels enjoyed in developed countries, but also to maintain the levels of social service provision they themselves enjoyed until recent years.

16. **Disruptions and dislocations caused by war and conflict:** Innovation in the delivery and financing of social services can be considered only in an environment free of major violent conflict and where the security situation will permit such innovation. In recent years, many of the world's poorest nations have also been burdened with the outbreak of internal and external conflict of varying intensity. Where rudimentary social services have been available, the outbreak of war can result in the demolition, looting and disruption of whatever services and facilities existed in the past. Not only does conflict put an end to existing services, it also makes it impossible for Governments to allocate necessary resources and carry out the planning and implementation of basic services needed by their people. Conflict often puts an end to whatever services were provided by local national or voluntary organizations and also makes provision of external technical support difficult or impossible. It becomes essential, therefore, that every effort be exerted to prevent violence and put an end to conflict where such situations exist. Social development is impossible when basic essential social services are denied to the civilian population and where vulnerable members of the community are indiscriminately exposed to bombing, summary execution, rape and the threat of landmines.

17. In a situation where the conditions of violence and insecurity affect a growing number of communities and peoples of the developed and developing world, parallel

actions should be implemented at the national and international levels. On one hand, all types of external assistance should be denied to "warlords": in order to exert effective pressure on them to resolve conflicts, resources should be withheld until peace is achieved. On the other hand, international voluntary organizations should continue to support the initiatives of local communities to provide basic shelter, health care, nutrition and education to the affected peoples. Refugees and displaced persons are particularly vulnerable and in need of social services that provide both immediate assistance to ensure survival and longer-term rehabilitation to permit the resumption of normal lives.

18. The need is becoming more urgent to arrest **environmental degradation** which has resulted from previous unsustainable development efforts. New efforts to reduce poverty and address a range of social problems must be planned on the basis of environmental sustainability.

19. **Democracy:** The number of countries currently holding elections to select authority is unprecedented. While it must be recognized that in some cases this is little more than a formal exercise, the global tendency is nevertheless towards increased participation in governance activities, particularly at the local (municipality, community) level. It is at this local level that social services are usually best perceived by the population. While citizens may be less concerned with governing philosophy they understand very well — and demand — services to meet their immediately perceived needs. Depending on this response, they will vigorously exercise their right to vote and will determine the fate of local authorities. This reality provides a major incentive for political actors to promise sound and appropriate social services (in order to be elected) and then, once in office, to actually provide them (in order to ensure re-election).

20. **State reform:** Many reforms in the social sector take place in the context of reform of the State. The main motivation for reform has often been a perceived need to increase efficiency and reduce public expenditure, rather than to improve the range and quality of social services. As such, these reforms — although affecting the social sector — have generally been spearheaded by the planning ministry or the financial sector, not the social sectors. The social sectors have often taken a rather weak stance by not trying to push their agendas. The result has usually been a situation where countries may have achieved some degree of macro-equilibria in terms of public finance — but often as a result, at least in part, of a reduction of social services, particularly those services oriented towards the poorest sectors of the population. The need to improve the articulation of social

goals as well as to establish a valid dialogue between the financial and the social sectors should be a main consideration of the social agenda.

21. **Promotion of primary services and prevention strategies** takes on increased importance. Several international publications, including the World Health Organization (WHO) Declaration of Alma-Ata,^b the *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the *World Development Report, 1993: Investing in Health*,^c of the World Bank, have shown that there are considerable savings to be derived from concentrating on primary levels in health care. Similar arguments have been made for primary education. Furthermore, interventions at the preventive or promotional level in public health have been shown to be extremely cost-effective. Nevertheless, little reallocation of resources from the secondary or tertiary levels to primary care in health or basic education has taken place.

22. Regardless of the country, we are likely to see higher demands for services combined with curtailed financial support. Service rationing is a likely consequence, and utilization management based on best practices will drive the allocation of resources. Universal services will be based on new delivery systems and objectives. Shifts to prevention services will be common. For action to be taken and for progress to be achieved, clear targets and strong political commitment must be established.

III. Mechanisms of service delivery

A. Setting priorities

23. Critical to the successful realization of the goals established by the World Summit for Social Development with respect to achieving basic social services for all is the nature of the mechanisms that exist within each country for the setting of national priorities. However well intentioned the commitments "on paper" may be, they will only be assured of being translated from desirable goals into tangible accomplishments if sufficient political support can be generated at critical stages of the decision-making process. Such support is best assured if the groups that have the greatest interest in their realization are able to strongly influence the decision-making process, and can ensure that there will be the necessary political will to carry through to successful conclusions. This takes us into the realm of governance, which is the process by which a society makes decisions about the needs of its citizens, the relative priorities to be placed on different needs, and how its

available resources — financial and otherwise — are to be utilized to support those agreed priorities. Governance speaks to such issues as:

(a) Choice as to which services are to be provided and how decisions with respect to those services are to be made;

(b) Decisions about who will be the beneficiaries of the different services, and on what basis they will have access;

(c) Consideration as to how services will be financed or otherwise provided with the resources required for their effective operation.

24. Good governance — which includes responsiveness to the needs of citizens as expressed by the citizens themselves — and adherence to best practices in executing the functions of government are essential to ensuring that commitments made in respect to universal access to basic social services will be honoured. While it must be appreciated that systems of governance will vary among countries because of differences in history, culture and other circumstances, there are certain characteristics that greatly increase the likelihood that canons of good governance will apply, and this also enhances the likelihood that basic social services will be provided in a manner that is satisfactory to the population. These characteristics may include:

(a) A democratic system of government;

(b) A highly participatory model of governance, which facilitates the wide-scale involvement of representatives of civil society and other stakeholders in the decision- and policy-making processes of the country;

(c) A high degree of decentralization, which provides a framework for the involvement of a wide range of actors, including representatives of local government, the private sector, and non-governmental and community-based organizations, in the provision of social services, in varying capacities;

(d) Free, open and professional media with diversity of ownership and control.

25. A participatory model of governance can also make significant contributions to the prospect of achieving universal basic social services, through its effectiveness in a number of areas that currently constitute major constraints or pose severe risks to effective social service delivery, by, *inter alia*:

(a) Reducing or eliminating corruption;

(b) Ensuring greater accountability and transparency;

(c) Reducing waste and misuse of services;

(d) Providing an effective mechanism to ensure appropriate monitoring and provision of feedback with regard to service delivery.

26. There are no simple, fixed relationships between a social need and its satisfaction through the provision of a social service. Social services need to be provided within particular social and cultural contexts, in ways that respect universal human rights, and the satisfaction of needs should encourage or take into account traditional local solutions. In the light of the new challenges, social services need to be delivered in ways that do not restrict access. The State needs to set in place transparent procedures and mechanisms to ensure that the services reach the recipients. The delivery of social services should integrate mechanisms for monitoring and feedback. In principle, all mechanisms of social service delivery should be impartial and culturally acceptable. On the other hand, the notion of the "passive recipient" should be transformed into that of the "active participant" who defines the service in accordance with perceived social needs, evaluates its efficiency, provides ideas to improve its quality and makes sure that the user feedback provided is taken into account.

B. Ensuring participation of users

27. Provision of services by the State does not by itself ensure effective utilization of services. There is, for example, no dearth of empty rural health clinics in the developing world, where the poor can find neither doctors nor medicines. Lack of resources is not always the main reason for this phenomenon. The main problem is that there is often very little incentive for health authorities to ensure that doctors and medicine are available at remote places at the right time. One solution lies in active involvement by the local population in ensuring that the services meant for them are actually provided to them. For example, experience has shown that educated and politically conscious rural people can ensure, through local agitation, that the rural clinics in their villages run properly, while in other places where the general population is neither so well educated nor so politically conscious, empty clinics will still prevail.

28. There is a worldwide need for a revolution in the provision of education and training. This revolution should take into account the specific training needs of populations for basic nutrition; primary health care; reproductive health

care; childbirth attendance; childcare; pre-school education; basic literacy; building skills; and improved agricultural techniques that promote environmental sustainability. Apart from equipping people with the skills they require to provide for their own basic social service needs and those of their communities (thus preparing the ground for transforming passive recipients of social services into active participants), this type of revolution could alleviate unemployment and update sometimes-irrelevant educational systems. In many countries, secondary and tertiary education still follow obsolete patterns which are in no way linked to existing or potential job opportunities. Education and training should not just impart information and equip people with specific skills, but also aim to teach people how to learn, to adapt and to use knowledge, so that they will be better able to respond to rapid changes in economic conditions and employment opportunities.

29. Users will participate when they are assured that they will benefit from the results of their input. A direct relationship is necessary between input and outcome. Participatory mechanisms should ensure that special attention is given to involving participants who are indeed stakeholders in the process and who have a fundamental interest in its outcome. Users also need to be given sufficient background information to be able to direct their inputs. Users of services may be represented at several levels: they may be primary users, secondary users or users indirectly affected by outcomes. For example, in situations where grandparents are undertaking increasing responsibility for rearing their grandchildren as a result of increasing single parenthood or loss of natural parents from accident or conflict, they become more fundamentally involved, as stakeholders, in decisions affecting child-rearing.

30. Institutional mechanisms should ensure user involvement in an advisory, focused input or governance capacity. Indeed, user input needs to occur before the institutional structures are established. Such elements as accessibility, user-friendliness and effective services based on perceived needs are essential. User participation should be based upon simple values and principles related to the social services system. For example, parents should generally be considered the primary caretakers and their inputs on child-rearing should be weighted heavily in decision-making.

31. Clustering several services has been found a useful technique for providing people with important services that they may not value initially, such as vaccinations and inoculations. Providing different services in one place offers multiple pay-offs for users and can encourage more socially appropriate use of services — for example, by providing

food subsidies linked with health-care services, both user and public needs can be met.

32. Widespread awareness of the availability and quality of services is important. Appropriate techniques, including word of mouth, are important in conducting public awareness campaigns. Enlisting users in both marketing and public relations efforts can result in improved efficiency in both input and delivery systems.

33. However, providers are often not the most appropriate persons to enlist user input. Advocacy groups sometimes play a key bridging role; but the tools employed by advocates need to include bridge-building skills, as well as other, perhaps more commonly employed methods such as confrontation and conflict.

34. Whenever the leadership of a community comes together on a sustained basis, it can have a powerful effect on system change, development, monitoring and initiation. "For the good of the community" the leadership can choose a focus that reflects the priorities of populations — issues such as child abuse, violence and educational and vocational training are ready examples. A prestigious foundation or corporation can provide funds, but equally important is the knowledge that community leaders are involved and are being held to a higher standard — that is to say, a joint effort to address child abuse. For example, in one community, all the representatives of law enforcement, the judiciary and the media and executives of private non-profit agencies have joined politicians and social services administrators to compose a leadership forum. It meets quarterly to share information and to look for gaps in the social service system. All members agree that nothing discussed in the meeting can be used against another member and there is strong pressure to enforce this credo.

35. Partnerships are formed and succeed when mutual needs are met. Corporations need workers — educated workers — and workers with a "work ethic". The costs of recruitment, training, maintenance and replacement of workers suggest that companies would be wise to invest some resources initially in developing and keeping good workers, rather than substantially greater resources later, in continuously recruiting and training new workers. One outcome is a partnership for education that focuses on appropriate skills development starting in early childhood. For example, in one particular community, the money spent on recruitment at the college level has been cut in half to fund lower-grade education.

36. One never knows when an individual will become a user of any social service. In principle, therefore, investment in good, high-quality services that are affordable, accessible

and community-based is in every person's interest. In this context, firms have developed new ways for their employees to invest in the community and in services they may need at some point. A "day of helping", whereby companies allow employees time off to do volunteer work in their communities, can bring much-needed human resources to social service agencies. The experience gives company employees greater awareness of social concerns and an increased investment in the agency, with concomitant increases in loyalty and knowledge.

37. Some users cannot speak for themselves. The very young, and sometimes the ill and older persons, are examples of such users. They are users who should not be forgotten. Groups of volunteers should reach out to these groups to bring them into the system.

C. National level

38. Insofar as social services are concerned, most Governments are likely to continue to play a major role in service delivery. In principle, countries should seek to preserve, maintain and improve that part of their existing social service infrastructure that functions well. This is true for the "planned economy" as well as for the "mixed economy" and "market economy" countries, and is relevant not only to developed countries but also to developing countries. The only difference among countries stems from the fact that the nature of the role played by the State may vary. In some cases, the State will remain the main service provider. In other cases, the State's role may evolve so that it becomes more a guarantor of national minimum standards and an enabler of provision by other actors. The functions each Government chooses to undertake will vary, and there is no one model for service provision. Sometimes, the State will play the role of independent provider, and other times it will undertake partnerships with other providers, such as quasi-governmental agencies, cooperatives, civil organizations, non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations and the private sector.

39. It is likely that in some cases the State will have to remain the "provider of last resort" for small segments of the population but, increasingly, the responsibility for a broad range of services will fall to partnerships of numerous actors, most often operating in local communities. Governments will nevertheless continue to determine how public resources will flow to users.

40. The goal for service provision should be to reduce the inevitable gaps in the safety net to the smallest possible size; occasions where people "fall through the gaps" should

become the exception rather than the rule. Achievement of this goal will continue to require some degree of national-level planning, monitoring and evaluation of social services. Only through the establishment of a system of trained professionals who can achieve a broad overview can comprehensive safety nets be achieved. Individual service providers, with their focus that is more local, may find it harder to invest in the concept of the community safety net.

D. Ensuring access for all

41. On the issue of universal access to services, it is necessary to distinguish between universalism as a goal and universalism as a means. It is perfectly reasonable to set the universal goal that every citizen should have access to at least a basic minimum level of social services, but this does not necessarily require the State to take upon itself the responsibility for providing services to everyone. In fact, it may sometimes be necessary to target public provisioning towards specific groups in order to ensure universal access for all. For instance, if the State tries to provide free food or free health services for all in a resource-poor economy, it is quite likely that the rich and the powerful will corner all the benefits, leaving precious little for the really needy. Since the rich would have enjoyed the services anyway, even without State provisioning, universal access can be ensured in this situation only by targeting the subsidy to the poor.

42. All States, rich and poor, should aim, however, to provide free (or heavily subsidized) universal services of certain basic kinds, such as primary health care and primary education. It has to be recognized that providing free services to some or all people requires resources and therefore is not free to society. However, as has been demonstrated by a number of poor countries, free universal provisioning of these services should not be beyond the financial capacity of even the poorest of countries. The reason is that these services are essentially labour-intensive in nature, and labour is cheap in poor countries. In fact, the poorer the country, the cheaper its labour, and hence the cheaper it is to provide these services.

43. Beyond the basic level, however, fees might be charged but subsidies would have to be targeted towards the poor. In most poor countries, the very opposite happens to be the case. The lion's share of State subsidies in health and education goes towards expensive activities such as sophisticated curative practices and higher education, whose benefit accrues largely to the rich. These inequities must be reversed and State expenditures reallocated, so that greater access can be ensured with the same level of resources. The

rich must be made to pay for the expensive services, be it through the market or through State provisioning with user charges.

44. While targeting is essential, it is not easy. Many attempts to target subsidies to the poor have in fact ended up diverting benefits to the wrong people. The ideal solution is to devise self-selection mechanisms whereby the target population will select itself to claim the benefit while the rich will by and large exclude themselves in their own interest. Successful examples of such self-selection mechanisms can be found in the area of credit delivery (for example, in the well-known Grameen Bank model) and in the food-for-work programmes used in many developing countries; but such mechanisms are yet to be devised in other areas, such as health care and education. A complementary method of ensuring proper targeting is to devise institutional mechanisms for involving the population at large in the formulation and implementation of service delivery schemes.

45. When resource constraints are severe, it may be necessary to charge some fee even to the poor. The point is simply that if it becomes possible to ensure universal access to services by charging a small fee to the poor, this is much better than not providing any services at all owing to lack of resources. It needs to be recognized that the poor are actually more able and willing to pay for the services they need than is often supposed. What is needed, though, are appropriate institutional mechanisms that would enable the poor to pay with a minimum of pain. A major problem facing the poor is that the perennial pressure of "making the two ends meet" makes it difficult for them to save up enough to pay for services when they need them most. One possible solution of this problem — one that has been tried with some apparent success in one Asian country in the sphere of health care — is to introduce vouchers that the poor may buy whenever they can afford to do so (for example, immediately after a harvest in the case of the rural poor) and use to pay for services whenever they need them. Another solution is to employ the technique, used successfully by many non-governmental organizations, whereby the poor are required to save regularly in small amounts as a precondition for receiving services such as credit or training. These savings can then be used as a potential source of financing for additional services.

IV. Resources

A. Understanding resources

46. As noted earlier, it is important, for the purpose of deciding the level and nature of social service provision and its detailed planning by Government, to view resources broadly. The provision of services will typically involve a combination of different types of resources, provided by different social actors, public and private. In different communities, different types of resources are particularly scarce, and prudent planning requires one to make the greatest use possible of those in ample supply and to economize those in short supply. In some communities, time is a plentiful resource, and this may be mobilized in the form of voluntary labour and volunteering. The organizational skills and logistic capacity of business are another resource that is often overlooked in poorer countries but put to good use in more developed economies for non-profit community activities.

47. The most commonly overlooked resources are the knowledge, skill and capacity for self-help of the persons for whom social services are provided. When these are imaginatively combined with other resources, the benefits that can accrue to those people and to society at large are much greater than the sum of their parts.

48. It is important also to distinguish the real resources needed to support social services, in terms of equipment, infrastructure and people's input of labour, from financial resources. Concern with financial resources serves to focus attention on the methods by which real resources can be channelled to particular uses rather than on their level and on whom the burden of funding falls.

B. Mobilization, allocation and effective use

49. In all countries, the major part of some social services has to be provided or supported through the public sector in order to ensure equitable accessibility. Therefore, ensuring adequate sources of revenue to support these services is also essential.

50. Resources to support the provision of social services typically come from a combination of three sources:

- (a) Fees for services, paid by beneficiaries;
- (b) Public subsidies, provided by government from fiscal revenues at local, state or national level;

(c) Voluntary contributions, domestic and international.

51. Modalities of resource mobilization have implications for both equity and universality of access as well as for quality of services, as has already been stated. Universality of access (the solidarity principle), whereby different income groups have equal right and access to social services, helps ensure high quality of services. Attempts to subsidize access to and costs of basic social services for the poor, and to target only the poor, may not be successful if they lead to a situation where there are insufficient resources to ensure overall quality.

52. Provision of social services requires that the resources needed to be balanced against resources devoted to non-social services. To the extent that social services are financed and provided by government, the budget process and the political system are the main instruments through which the exact allocation of resources to social sectors is decided upon. Other factors also affect this allocation, such as the stage of economic development, the availability and type of external assistance, and the source and nature of domestic resource mobilization.

53. Different sources of financing often have different implications for equity and efficiency, and these in turn affect the effective delivery of social services. For example, broad-based tax systems with simple tax structures and few exemptions can increase the resources available for the country as a whole and allow more room for experimenting with alternative forms of social service delivery, including funding services delivered by private sector or non-governmental organizations. It has been found also that the more transparent the instruments of resource mobilization, and the more service delivery is tied to these instruments, the more effective service delivery is ultimately. A contrary example is that of funds raised at the local level that are passed on to the central government and then transferred back to local governments in the form of intergovernmental grants; here, the quality and delivery of social services by local governments may suffer because the system of intergovernmental grants has vague sharing formulas which divorce the costs and benefits of delivering services. In addition, experience shows that when the costs of providing services are delinked from the community that benefits, the quality of social services is likely to be poor.

54. The total amount of revenue available to pay for all public goods is subject to political choice, as is the proportion of that which is allocated to social services. There is currently a widespread tendency to believe that revenue raised through taxation must be cut, under pressure of

immutable global forces. In fact this is a misleading simplification. For example, in advanced economies, revenue collections have not fallen at all so far; in fact, in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, the average proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) collected as revenue has continued to edge up.

55. Increases in revenue collections are quite feasible for most countries. The exceptions are those in which the ratio of revenue to GDP is already very high. Increased collection can commonly be achieved simply by improving the efficiency of tax administrations. In contrast to developed countries, developing countries not only collect too little in the way of tax revenue in relation to GDP, but also face a vicious circle of tax evasion and under-provision of social services. That tax evasion leads to poor quality as well as low levels of social service provision in turn reduces people's incentive to pay tax and leads to a larger informal economy. Developing countries need to break this vicious circle by improving tax administrations, simplifying the tax structure and broadening the tax base. Other possibilities include reducing tax expenditures; increasing the progressiveness of tax systems; and introducing or increasing taxes on activities widely recognized as being damaging, such as pollution (for example, taxes on the emission of greenhouse gases, of which petrol taxes are a clear and widely accepted form) and financial volatility (for which a tax on currency transfers or dealings, such as that proposed by Nobel laureate Professor James Tobin, would be a useful antidote).

56. At the very least there is nothing inevitable about revenue reductions, particularly if countries discuss the issues cooperatively and agree that they will maintain standards of social service provision. Taxes and charges may be more politically acceptable when linked with the improvements in services they are used to pay for. For example, revenue from a Tobin tax could be used to pay for other financial stabilization measures and to compensate those most damaged by financial volatility.

57. What Governments often buy (that is to say, the composition of government expenditure) can often adversely affect resource mobilization. For example, too often more resources are used to fund wages and salaries in social sectors and fewer resources are available for purchasing equipment and supplies such as drugs or textbooks; and yet, the latter is important for effective service delivery. Within many national budgets there may well be scope for reconsidering the allocation of resources, for example, by reducing military outlays and those on "intelligence services", in order to release funds for higher-priority social

services. Such reallocation has the twin benefits of improving services and of increasing labour-intensive employment. The essential point to remember is that some of the widely perceived constraints may not be as predetermined as market fundamentalists claim.

58. In industrialized economies, the service sector, including social services, is increasing in importance in relation to both agriculture and industry. The delivery of social services, despite trends towards displacement of labour through new technologies, including communications technologies, tends to be relatively employment-intensive. This can have positive implications for resource mobilization as well as for the quality of services. For example:

(a) The fact that social services create new local employment opportunities improves both the local and the national tax base which is used to finance social services;

(b) By improving workers' incomes through employment-based delivery mechanisms, the beneficiary's ability to pay for services is enhanced;

(c) Employment-intensive approaches for delivery of services link supply and demand side strategies for both delivery and financing;

(d) Additional benefits of employment-oriented delivery mechanisms include improved quality through more personalized approaches and reduced opportunities for corruption. Both of these factors lead to more efficient delivery of services with important implications for costs of delivery and resource requirements.

59. Finally, markets are unlikely to automatically orient delivery mechanisms towards employment-intensive approaches and therefore public policy interventions are necessary to orient both the technological and fiscal approaches in favour of greater use of labour and to ensure equilibrium between supply and demand for labour.

C. External resources

60. For many countries, external resources in various forms, including especially financial resources and expertise, can make an important contribution in terms of supplementing particularly scarce domestic resources and directing more resources into activities that promote social objectives. At the same time, it needs to be recognized that external assistance as a source of funding social services provides challenges for the providers as well as the recipient Governments. On the one hand, it is important that the desire to steer more resources to social needs and social service

provision not be at the expense of other critical recipient needs. On the other hand, it is equally important to recognize that, because funds are fungible, resources intended to support social programmes may actually pay for other activities.

61. Although commitment 10 of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development^d emphasized the improvement and strengthening of the framework for international, regional and subregional cooperation for social development "in a spirit of partnership, through the United Nations and other multilateral institutions", more effort should be made to ensure that planning, financing, and implementation of programmes and projects reflect the principle of partnership in all its ramifications. To ensure this, the following specific guidelines are suggested:

(a) Fully involving participants and users in conceptualizing needs and planning social services to respond to the identified needs;

(b) Using to the fullest indigenous and local knowledge, wisdom and technical skills in the design and delivery of externally supported programmes;

(c) Ensuring that what is offered reflects actual local needs rather than the priorities of donor organizations;

(d) Avoiding onerous conditions, especially of the "one size fits all" variety, and minimizing unintended negative consequences arising from any conditions that may be attached to external financing;

(e) Taking steps to ensure that technical assistance provided at the international, regional and subregional levels takes full account of cultural differences and sensitivities;

(f) Being aware that, in addition to the provision of external financial resources, external assistance can also take the form of exchanges of expertise, shared initiatives of non-governmental organizations and other similar help. Such efforts can enhance the capacity of the assisted social services sector to design, implement, manage, monitor and evaluate projects so that services can be provided more efficiently.

V. Information

62. In an age of public/private partnerships, the need for timely, reliable, fully accessible and accurate information for all social policy-making is more vital than ever before. Both good governance and efficiency in service delivery and consumption require good information. Yet current information systems have proved to be inadequate at some

times and unavailable at others. Information is generally not provided in a user-friendly and timely manner. Indeed, access to accurate information should be considered a part of citizenship and the democratic decision-making process more generally. Only informed users and informed providers make optimal choices.

63. In many countries, the existing mechanisms to generate necessary information are inadequate. This is particularly the case at the level where information is most often required, namely the local level. When information does exist, it is frequently not sufficiently standardized to enable implementation of relevant or beneficial social service provision and delivery. This can also lead to the inability to monitor and evaluate social service delivery and provision, causing a breakdown in the feedback loop necessary to ensure efficient and equitable outcomes. Moreover, learning from past projects for the sake of future activities is severely curtailed.

64. Sound information management is crucial for any policy to work. In this respect, the creation of a body that is autonomous with respect to other institutions, insofar as structure, financing and decision-making are concerned, may offer an innovative approach to offset the information deficit that has plagued policy implementation in the past. It should, however, feed into the larger system of decision-making, monitoring and resource allocation. This body should be mandated to provide relevant information to all concerned parties in a timely and open manner.

65. There should also be decentralized information networks that are able to respond to rapid social, economic and political changes. These networks could function as "early warning systems" and supplement the efforts of official information management activities.

66. For any information system to operate properly, trained information specialists will be required. These specialists should be connected to the communities that they serve and have a stake in the outcome of policy initiatives.

67. Ongoing evaluation and monitoring are an integral part of all policies and programmes. This should be reflected throughout the project process including the pre-planning, financing and post-implementation stages. The design of any project or programme to deliver social services should automatically include provision for information gathering, monitoring and evaluation, and mechanisms to ensure that these activities take place. Information management is no "add-on" but is essential to sound policy-making.

68. Apart from its instrumental role in generating awareness, monitoring situations and evaluating

performances, information should also be regarded as a vital social service in itself, all the more important in areas where failure to provide it is likely to result in gross malfunctions of social institutions or undermine social justice. The importance of information has long been recognized in the political arena, where a number of institutions, such as a free press, have been devised precisely to prevent these undesirable developments. Outside the political sphere, however, few institutions that produce, accumulate and disseminate information are held in similar respect and enjoy a comparable constitutional status, and little has been done to secure the average citizen's access to information that may affect his or her activities and well-being, even though it appears to be generally understood that restricting access to information facilitates its abuse and the manipulation of the less informed. It is therefore necessary to give priority to improving access to information for all. It must be recognized that such access is a social right which should be legally protected by society.

69. While a vast amount of information is being collected and made available by public agencies, there has been a tendency for the relative volume of such information to decline in relation to proprietary information collected and marketed by private firms. Governments need to be alert to the possibility that information essential for people to make appropriate choices and exercise their rights effectively might gravitate from the public to the private domain, where it may only be available for a fee, thus putting persons less well off at a disadvantage.

70. The Expert Workshop was convened to consider issues related to innovations in the delivery and financing of social services. Every society needs strong, effective and appropriate social services to promote the lofty and inspirational goals — namely, to eradicate poverty, to promote productive employment and sustainable livelihoods, and to enhance social integration — set out at the World Summit for Social Development. To ensure that services live up to expectations for effective and efficient provision and actually contribute to reaching the Copenhagen goals, concerted and long-term efforts will be required by all the social actors. There is no secret formula that countries can adopt to solve their social problems or guarantee effective social services. Progress will come through trial and error. Innovation and the desire to continually improve services must be foremost among the goals of programme planners and administrators; and yet we also must acknowledge that there are many things that can and should be done — things that could be done quickly — without substantial increases in resources. Many ideas were discussed at this Expert Workshop that can lead to improved social services in

countries at all levels of development, and we trust that the statements and suggestions contained in the present report will prove useful to the members of the Commission for Social Development as they undertake their deliberations. However, we would be remiss if we did not also state that progress in provision and true innovation in the delivery and financing of social services will lie in the ability of politicians and programme administrators to make hard choices and take concrete actions so that what we know can and should be done will indeed be done.

Notes

^a *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution I, annex II.

^b *Alma-Ata 1978: Primary Health Care. Report of the International Conference on Primary Health Care, Alma-Ata, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 6–12 September 1978*, "Health for All" Series, No. 1 (Geneva, WHO, 1978), reprinted 1983.

^c New York, Oxford University Press, 1993.

^d See *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution I, annex I, sect. C, para. 29.

Appendix

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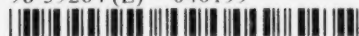
9-19 February 1999

Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups**International Year of Older Persons and follow-up arrangements****Note by the Secretary-General****Contents**

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* E/CN.5/1999/1.



Introduction

1. In accordance with previous decisions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development, the Commission will consider, under item 3 (b) of the agenda of its thirty-seventh session, issues pertaining to ageing, in particular the International Year of Older Persons (1999).

2. The Commission for Social Development, in its resolution 35/1,¹ invited the Secretary-General to make recommendations on different options for the future review and appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing,² and to report to the Commission at its next session. At its thirty-sixth session, the Commission took note of the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.5/1998/3), entitled "Options for the future review and appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing". In its decision 36/101,³ the Commission requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its thirty-seventh session a report on action taken to implement this decision and on further possible options for substantially improving the reliability, validity and practicability of the current review and appraisal exercise, focusing in particular on priorities identified in ongoing preparatory discussions for the International Year of Older Persons.

3. The present note includes suggestions for the development of a long-term perspective strategy on ageing into the twenty-first century; streamlining the review and appraisal of the International Plan of Action on Ageing; and the four plenary meetings of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session to be devoted to follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons.

I. Towards a long-term perspective strategy on ageing into the twenty-first century

4. The report of the Secretary-General on the conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation and observance of the International Year of Older Persons (A/50/114) put forward the theme "Towards a society for all ages" and suggested four dimensions for exploring such a society: the situation of older persons; lifelong individual development; multigenerational relationships; and the interplay of population ageing and development. Subsequently, in his report on the operational framework for the Year (A/52/328), the Secretary-General informed Member States that the feasibility of formulating a long-term

perspective strategy on ageing to the year 2020 was being explored by the Secretariat.

5. In its resolution 52/80 of 12 December 1997, the General Assembly encouraged States, with the support of United Nations organizations, bodies and programmes and of non-governmental organizations, to formulate policies and programmes on ageing so as to promote a society for all ages. Furthermore, in his report on the preparations for the International Year of Older Persons (A/53/294), the Secretary-General suggested that the General Assembly might wish to invite national committees to consider implementing practical strategies towards a society for all ages aimed at mainstreaming ageing into policies and programmes.

6. The future perspective strategy has a solid foundation in the work of the United Nations on ageing. It includes the most significant international instrument on ageing, the International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted by the World Assembly on Ageing in 1982, and endorsed the same year by the General Assembly. The continuing interest of the international community in the issue of ageing has been demonstrated by a series of General Assembly actions in the 1990s. On 16 December 1991, the General Assembly, in its resolution 46/91, adopted the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, contained in the annex thereto; subsequently, in 1992, the General Assembly held a two-day special session and adopted, in its resolution 47/86 of 16 December 1992, the global targets on ageing for the year 2001 (A/47/339, sect. III). The targets are a set of practical objectives designed to assist Governments and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Plan of Action. At the same session, the General Assembly also adopted the Proclamation on Ageing (resolution 47/5 of 16 October 1992, annex), in which, among other things, the General Assembly decided to observe the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. Finally, in preparation for the Year, the General Assembly considered the conceptual and operational frameworks.

7. All these international consensus documents on ageing are based on the International Plan of Action on Ageing, and could therefore be considered an extension of its conceptual premises, which include both individual and population ageing, and address the humanitarian and developmental aspects of ageing. The Plan of Action emphasizes the lifelong nature of ageing and calls for a general policy of prevention. It also promotes an age-integrated society, which forms the basis of the society for all ages. However, it is clear that the Plan of Action's recommendations have a clearly defined focus on the situation of older persons. While

this is a valid approach, additional policy avenues are required to move towards a society for all ages.

8. Therefore, as suggested in document E/CN.5/1998/3, while the primary focus of the International Plan of Action on Ageing on the situation of older persons was maintained, complementary strategies based on the four dimensions of a society for all ages could be added. This would be achieved through the elaboration of the long-term perspective strategy on ageing. Such a strategy would take an age group and sectorally integrated approach, originating from the concept of a society for all ages. It may be elaborated from many perspectives. One of them has been explored by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. It is based on the individual life course and that of the social micro-environment of family, neighbourhood and communities of interest, as well as the macrosocial (macro-societal) environment. The essence of such an approach is double-faceted. First, there is facilitation of individual development into late life, with this facilitation focusing on self-help and independence. Second, there is strengthening of the enabling micro-environments of families, neighbourhoods and communities of interest, as well as of societal institutions, incorporating both individual and institutional approaches. Priority areas (themes) within this perspective could then be selected for each review and appraisal exercise (proposed for every five years) by the Commission for Social Development.

9. Several important initiatives of the United Nations Secretariat are planned to support the development of the future perspective strategy on ageing, including the Research Agenda on Ageing for the twenty-first century, an interregional expert group meeting on policies for a society for all ages, and other meetings.

10. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/109 of 9 December 1998, recommended that research agendas for the next decades address the socio-economic adjustments required to move towards a society for all ages, and requested the United Nations programme on ageing to give priority attention to the research needs of developing countries. As reported in document A/53/294, the first phase of the research agenda on ageing for the next century is under way, with an initial expert group meeting scheduled for 1-3 February 1999. An interactive Web site has been established on the Internet, with a closed discussion area for the use of meeting participants in exchanging pre-meeting ideas. The ongoing outputs of the research agenda will also contribute to the long-term perspective strategy on ageing, as will the Interregional Expert Group Meeting on Policies for a Society for All Ages, to be held in mid-1999 in Bangkok, and other expert group meetings in the pipeline.

II. Options to improve the review and appraisal of the International Plan of Action on Ageing

11. The limitations of the current review and appraisal exercise of the International Plan of Action on Ageing and the need for a new approach were detailed in the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-sixth session (E/CN.5/1998/3). Factors noted included the low response rate to the questionnaire by Member States, and problems in respect of the interpretation of questions by Member States which make it difficult to produce comparable data. In the same report, the Secretary-General proposed that the review and appraisal exercise of the Plan of Action be undertaken every five years, in conjunction with the publication of the World Ageing Situation report. A more focused exercise was suggested, specifically to gather information from Member States on selected priority areas, which would be chosen by the Commission in advance. These priority areas could be linked to the future long-term perspective strategy on ageing, as elaborated in paragraph 8 of this note.

12. Two other initiatives are under way that will serve to support the review and appraisal of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, as well as the future long-term perspective strategy. The Government of the Netherlands is providing the programme on ageing with the support of professional and technical staff from the Department of Sociology and Social Gerontology of the Free University of Amsterdam for the purpose of establishing a database on policies and programmes on ageing. It is proposed that the database will be Internet-accessible. The objectives are to provide Member States with on-line information on available public policy responses to population and individual ageing; to assemble a compendium of successful policies and programmes; and to contribute to the future strategy on ageing. It is also envisaged that the ongoing process of gathering and updating policy information from Member States will serve to assist in the monitoring of the implementation of the Plan of Action.

13. As requested by the Commission, the Secretariat further explored the idea of including an ageing-related development index in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report*. A meeting of the Ad hoc Informal Support Group for the International Year of Older Persons, held in May 1998, was devoted to discussion of this issue with responsible officials of UNDP, the United Nations Statistics Division, the Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat, and the Division

for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. It was decided at that time that, owing to a lack of sufficient basic data in many countries, the introduction of an ageing-related index would be premature.

III. Plenary meetings at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly

14. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/80, four plenary meetings of the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session will be devoted to the follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons, which should take place at an appropriate global policy-making level. This will provide an opportunity to review both the promotional and substantive observance of the Year, and to present an outline of the future long-term perspective strategy on ageing. It is envisaged that Member States will report on the national observance of the Year, discuss national policy approaches towards a society for all ages, and present best practices at the national and local levels.

IV. Conclusion

15. At its thirty-seventh session, the Commission may wish to comment on the following proposals in the light of preparation for the International Year of Older Persons and beyond:

- (a) A future long-term perspective strategy on ageing;
- (b) A consolidated approach to the review and appraisal of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, which will employ a focused inquiry among Governments, and the creation and maintenance of a policy database;
- (c) Organization of the four plenary meetings at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Notes

¹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 6 (E/1997/26)*, chap. I, sect. D, resolution 35/1.

² *Report of the World Assembly on Ageing, Vienna, 26 July to 6 August 1982* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.1.16), chap. VI, sect. A.

³ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 6 (E/1998/26)*, chap. I, sect. B, decision 36/101.



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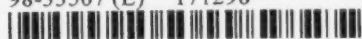
**Programme questions and other matters: United Nations Research
Institute for Social Development**

Report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-seventh session the report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, which covers the period from 1997 to 1998.

* E/CN.5/1999/1.



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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) was established in 1963 with a mandate "to conduct research into problems and policies of social development and relationships between various types of social development and economic development during different phases of economic growth". Since the 1960s, the objectives, approach and scope of UNRISD work have evolved. Early work of the Institute focused on improving social statistics and exploring the relationship between social and economic development, in particular the assumption that social development flowed automatically from economic growth and modernization.
2. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, UNRISD adopted a broader concept of social development, to embrace not only traditional social policy and planning concerns such as health, education and social statistics, but also issues related to inequality, discrimination, social movements and participation. The Institute sought to promote a more holistic and multidisciplinary approach to social development research that emphasized the nature of society's decision-making processes, its often conflicting social forces and the question of who wins and who loses in processes of economic and social change. These issues were very much at the forefront of the major UNRISD programmes of that time, dealing with the social effects of the Green Revolution, the role of cooperatives in development, refugees, popular participation and problems of food security.
3. Since the late 1980s, both the scope and objectives of UNRISD work have broadened considerably. By 1993, the number of programmes had doubled and approximately 70 countries were the focus of UNRISD research. While the Institute's main objectives have continued to be the promotion of cross-country comparative research on critical problems and issues of social development, UNRISD has diversified its role in response to the changing demands and opportunities of the 1990s.
4. The Institute has become more involved in applied research, responding directly to the concerns of policy makers and the international development community. Thus UNRISD places considerable emphasis on the need to bring together a diverse range of social and political actors in discussion on key social development issues. Through workshops, seminars and conferences, the Institute promotes dialogue among policy makers, donors, scholars, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grass-roots activists.
5. This focus has led the Institute to support the world conferences on development issues that have taken place in Rio de Janeiro, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul in recent years. The Institute also collaborates on a more regular basis with other United Nations agencies by preparing special reports, participating in high-level advisory groups and undertaking joint research programmes. Similar advisory work is carried out with a range of other multilateral and bilateral organizations, Governments, NGOs, research institutes and universities. A list of recent consultancy and advisory activities is provided in the following pages.
6. The present report covers the activities of UNRISD in 1997 and 1998. It is submitted to the Commission for Social Development in accordance with the terms of reference set out in the Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/126, 1 August 1963), in which it is stipulated that the Board of the Institute should, *inter alia*, submit regularly to the Commission "a progress report on the work of the Institute".
7. The period 1997–1998 has been one of transition for the Institute. First, there has been a change of Director. After ten years of service, Dharam Ghai retired in December 1997. The new Director, Thandika Mkandawire, was appointed by the Secretary-General on 24 December 1997 and took up his post on 1 May 1998. Secondly, the Institute has developed a major new research programme over the past two years. By late 1996, a number of research projects undertaken during preceding years were coming to a close. While continuing to edit and publish the large volume of discussion papers, articles and books produced by these projects, the Institute began to consider future initiatives and to define specific areas in which UNRISD could make a useful contribution during the coming years.
8. The biennium 1997–1998 saw the launching of major research programmes on Information Technologies and Social Development; Gender, Poverty and Well-being; Business Responsibility for Sustainable Development; Public Sector Reform and Crisis-Ridden States; and Emerging National and Regional Mass Tourism in Developing Countries. At the request of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNRISD also set up a programme on Grass-roots Initiatives and Knowledge Networks for Land Reform in Developing Countries. And at the request of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Institute has conducted applied research on the Gender Focal Point System of that organization. Furthermore, as part of its general effort to strengthen a rights-based perspective on development, UNRISD has sponsored a series of conferences and papers within an area entitled Globalization and Citizenship.

9. At the same time, the Institute has continued to support the follow-up activities to the World Summit for Social Development. In part this has occurred through contributions by staff members to meetings and discussions sponsored by various NGOs, agencies and Governments. In July 1997, UNRISD itself sponsored a large public conference, *Advancing the Social Agenda: Two Years after Copenhagen*, held to coincide with the meetings of the Economic and Social Council at Geneva. Seven other international meetings were sponsored by the Institute over the period 1997–1998, as well as over a dozen smaller workshops and seminars.

10. The most significant development in the area of dissemination has no doubt been the redesign and improvement of the UNRISD Web site (<http://www.unrisd.org>). UNRISD ON-LINE now contains 73 publications, reproduced in their entirety, as well as summary information on all research programmes, conference highlights and newsletters. During the biennium 1997–1998, 14 books were co-published with academic or commercial presses and three monographs were printed by UNRISD. In addition, the Institute published 17 Discussion Papers and eight Occasional Papers. The UNRISD report for the World Summit for Social Development (*States of Disarray: The Social Effects of Globalization*), originally published in English, Spanish and French, was translated into Arabic, Chinese, Korean and Russian.

11. More information on all UNRISD activities will be found below. The report begins with an overview of progress in developing the new research programme of the Institute.

II. New research programme

A. Globalization and Citizenship

12. In 1995, the UNRISD report for the World Summit for Social Development, *States of Disarray: The Social Effects of Globalization*, closed with a question that mirrored the concerns of a growing number of people around the world: can the stark polarizing trends of the past few decades be offset by new approaches that reaffirm the basic civil, political and socio-economic rights of every human being?

13. This concern has grown still stronger since the Summit. Over the past few years, a new “rights-based” approach to development issues has gathered strength, as large numbers of people affected by economic restructuring or by discrimination of various kinds demand full recognition of their dignity and human worth. The Secretary-

General of the United Nations has recently reinforced this trend by requesting that a human rights perspective be incorporated into all programme activities of United Nations organizations. The definition and protection of socio-economic rights, in addition to basic civil and political rights, has assumed increasing importance in this agenda.

14. During the biennium 1997–1998, the UNRISD programme on Globalization and Citizenship has attempted to strengthen a rights-based perspective on development in a number of ways. In the first place, it has provided an opportunity to analyse the process of rapid social and economic change, now usually subsumed under the general heading of globalization, that not only creates new options for many people, but also forms the backdrop for growing polarization and exclusion at the end of the twentieth century. In the second place, it has gone beyond the discourse on human rights per se, to frame the challenge of defining and protecting these rights in terms of the construction and defence of citizenship. Bringing the concept of citizenship to bear on the struggle for rights (at local, national, regional and global levels) can sharpen awareness of the institutional and political aspects of any viable rights regime. In the current struggle to protect the basic dignity of each human being, the challenge is not only to proclaim rights but also to create the kind of political community and the structure of efficient and legitimate institutions that can guarantee them. And the maintenance of such a community, with its attendant institutions and values, is the stuff of citizenship.

15. Work at UNRISD on the relationship between globalization and citizenship began with the organization of two conferences, the first held in Geneva in December 1996 and the second in Melbourne, Australia, in May 1997. Emphasis was placed at the Geneva meeting on macro-theoretical and conceptual issues, summarized in a conference report distributed during the fall of 1997.¹ Conversations in Melbourne focused more specifically on the relationship between globalization and the creation or protection of citizenship rights in the Asia-Pacific region.

16. Selected papers from the Geneva conference will be published in the journal *Citizenship Studies* and contributions to the Melbourne seminar will be published in book form during 1999.² In addition, a number of papers from the Geneva conference have been translated into Spanish for inclusion in a book on globalization and human rights that will be oriented towards a Latin American audience. Special essays for the Latin American collection will focus on economic liberalization and social protection in that region, as well as on the rights of children and

adolescents. The volume will be co-published with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

17. Following the Melbourne conference, researchers and activists from the Asia-Pacific region also agreed to prepare a series of monographs on citizenship debates in various countries of that region. These look particularly at the interrelationship between economic, social and cultural aspects of globalization, on the one hand, and both traditional and modern forms of solidarity and identity, on the other.

B. Information Technologies and Social Development

18. At a time when the world confronts immense social problems, many hopes for progress are grounded in the development potential of new information technologies. But technical breakthroughs in themselves are not a sufficient condition for improving the lives of most people in Third World countries. In fact, unless the conditions are created for relatively more disadvantaged groups to use information technologies constructively, the digital revolution may well accelerate an already alarming process of polarization and exclusion.

19. What will it take, in terms of social, economic, political and institutional innovation, to create a setting in which these technologies can be used to improve the conditions of less advantaged groups in the developing world? What are the basic elements for promoting an inclusive information society, rather than a world of information "haves" and "have nots"? The UNRISD programme on Information Technologies and Social Development is designed to provide a forum for exploring these questions, through a combination of approaches ranging from grass-roots social research in Third World villages and urban neighbourhoods, to national and international policy debates.

20. Work within the programme began in early 1997. Since then, Institute staff have established ties with a number of institutions and individuals concerned with the social implications of the digital revolution and have carried out a broad-ranging dialogue with many others through the Internet. The project Web site (<http://www.unrisd.org/infotech>) now contains links to a large collection of studies on the relationship between information technologies and social development in the Third World; information about relevant conferences and electronic discussion groups; and news about the project and its activities. Moreover, the

Institute has been represented in both virtual and actual debates on the social implications of the digital future, through presentations at TELECOM Inter@active, the Geneva chapter of the Internet Society, and the Asia Internet Forum.³ A short article discussing some of the key information technology issues in developing countries has been published in the international journal of the Internet Society.⁴

21. The first major contribution of the programme to the international debate on information technologies and social development took the form of a conference, held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 22 and 23 June 1998. With support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Sweden, the Institute hosted a gathering of 200 people, representing many interests and points of view: academics, local activists, representatives of development NGOs, multilateral and bilateral agencies, telecommunications and computer specialists and the media.

22. The conference began with a broad-ranging consideration of the pervasive social and economic shifts that seem to accompany the dawning of the global "information age". Then discussion shifted to analysis of concrete cases in which public policy has been applied to the task of developing national information strategies in Third World and transitional settings. The ways chosen by South Africa and Malaysia to integrate information technologies into their development strategies received particular attention. At the close of the first day, participants explored some of the key international policy issues affecting the likelihood that the new technologies can be used creatively to improve the lot of the disadvantaged. Examples of issues needing attention include accords to fix limits on the use of scarce physical resources (such as radio frequencies), determine the nature of satellite access and create binding obligations in trade and financial matters, negotiated in such strategic multilateral institutions as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Policy options in the field of information technology are also quite frequently circumscribed in various ways by agreements reached between borrowers and both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

23. The second day of the meeting focused on specific attempts to use information technologies in ways that improve livelihood and defend human rights in developing or transitional countries. The Grameen Bank initiative to provide rural women with mobile telephones, as well as the establishment of telecentres in rural Mexico and urban South Africa, provided useful case study material. Conference participants with experience in other types of programmes

and in other countries enriched the discussion and helped draw attention to elements of public policy, project organization and community commitment that favour some degree of success or render progress impossible. They also noted technical and economic factors that seem central to success or failure. Among other things, insights gained during this session contributed to a broader understanding of the institutional arrangements that facilitate the design and implementation of effective local programmes for disadvantaged groups.

24. A final session of the conference was dedicated to exploring the relationship between new information technologies, democratization and the defence of human rights. To focus the discussion, participants heard a presentation on the role of the Internet in promoting democracy in Russia, followed by a comparative analysis of the uses of information technologies in strengthening civil society in Brazil and Viet Nam.

25. A number of basic questions were considered during this session. What are the conditions under which the new technologies become effective tools for empowerment of various groups? How do grass-roots networks gain access to new information infrastructures and how do they learn to use them? How do these new tools supplement more traditional forms of communication (radio, telephone, television)? What technical adaptations increase the likelihood that relatively marginalized sectors of society can make their voices heard? What regulatory issues seem to have a particularly direct bearing on the role of electronic networking in processes of democratization and the defence of human rights?

26. The event closed with a general discussion on issues raised during the previous two days and on possible directions for future research. The conference was filmed and the resulting video is available on the UNRISD Web site. Conference papers are also being placed on line. A report on the meeting is being prepared for presentation both on the Web site and as an UNRISD conference report.

C. Gender, Poverty and Well-being

27. This project is being undertaken at a time when the concern for poverty reduction has made a reappearance on the international development agenda. As many observers have argued, the "new poverty consensus", with its twin-track strategy of labour-intensive growth plus improved social services, offers a powerful and potentially flexible route to poverty reduction. But there are several important gaps in this new consensus, among them a failure to deal

adequately with gender bias and to understand the differences between men's and women's poverty trajectories. The UNRISD programme on Gender and Poverty, which began in 1997, should address these gaps, in an attempt to improve both the analytical rigour and the empirical basis for dealing with gender issues within poverty-oriented policies and programmes.

28. During the first year of the project, UNRISD commissioned both thematic review papers and country-specific case studies on different aspects of the gender/poverty nexus. These papers were presented at an international workshop jointly organized by UNRISD and the Centre for Development Studies in Trivandrum, India, from 24 to 27 November 1997. Selected findings of the papers and the workshop discussions are summarized below.

29. **Indicators of well-being.** First, it seems necessary to question the widely-shared premise of universal, cross-cultural and a historical female disadvantage as well as to guard against the propensity to overlook areas of male disadvantage. The meagre evidence from households does not always show that boys and men have a favourable nutritional status. Even in north-western India, for example, village-level studies show some groups of adult men to be at greater risk of illness or low working ability than their wives because of thinness ("wasting"), while their wives are at risk of low reproductive ability because of inadequate nutrition during childhood ("stunting").⁵ Age and gender interact in complex ways, and understanding gendered disadvantage is dependent on having a dynamic perspective over the life cycles of men and women.

30. Another problem, methodological in nature, relates to the difficulties of using ungendered standards, in nutrition, anthropometry and health, for the measurement and interpretation of gender bias. Nowhere is this problem more visible than in attempts to compare women's and men's capacity for doing physically arduous work and its connections to ill- and well-being.⁶

31. After reviewing more than 20 different indicators of well-being — their availability, measurability and interpretability — one of the review papers⁷ concluded that the ratio of surviving girls to boys in the age categories of 0-4 and 5-9 years is probably the most reliable indicator of gender differentials in health and well-being. A controversial conclusion to emerge from the paper is that nutritional indicators, whether of food intake or anthropometric outcome, are not reliable for assessing gender differentials in well-being due to difficulties in fixing norms and cut-off points, the skill requirements for the enumerators and the time-consuming and expensive nature of the surveys.

32. A general conclusion to emerge from the workshop was that even the most gender-sensitive indicators of well-being, which may be useful for revealing bias, disclose nothing about their social meanings or about the social processes giving rise to gender differentials. Qualitative evidence is essential for understanding the social mechanisms contributing to poverty and destitution and for designing policies that may be able to address those problems. But there are serious difficulties in bringing qualitative insights into mainstream policy analysis, which is primarily quantitative, as the critical review of the World Bank's Poverty Assessments shows.⁸

33. **Gender, land reform and micro-credit.** Discussion on women and land reform focused on the inevitable tensions between policy imperatives to show results quickly, on the one hand, and intractable social problems that defy quick fixes on the other. Approaches to poverty that emphasize the transfer of assets to the poor, as if assets are gender-neutral, generally fail to recognize that women may have a different relationship to property than men. Women in different concrete situations are likely to have different strategies for capital accumulation; and in view of the male-dominated nature of agricultural markets and institutions, it may be important for advocacy groups to think not only of strengthening women's access to land but also of alternative strategies for bolstering women's assets.

34. Similarly, it is important to problematize the conventional wisdom on micro-credit, which sometimes implies that this is a "cure-all" for global poverty. In fact, micro-credit may not be the most appropriate livelihood strategy for women who are assetless and poor (as opposed to better-off women), given their lack of access to complementary resources such as capital, land, information and marketing. Micro-level evidence also shows that a significant proportion of women from poor, assetless households are reluctant to borrow. For better-off women there is evidence that micro-credit programmes have had positive material as well as gender-transformative implications. But even here the outcomes are contradictory: the pressures of regular (weekly) repayment of loans have generated considerable stress and strain on relationships between women borrowers (who are responsible for repayments) and their husbands (who sometimes control the loans), among the women borrowers who form women's groups, as well as between women borrowers and programme officials responsible for collecting the weekly payments.

35. Five of the commissioned studies on Gender and Poverty have been published as UNRISD Discussion Papers.⁹ An edited collection, which brings together 11 of

the commissioned papers and an overview chapter, is also being prepared for publication. In addition, an analytical report on the workshop is being written.

36. By the end of 1998, proposals for field research were being considered and research sites discussed. Country-level research should begin in early to mid-1999.

D. Business Responsibility for Sustainable Development

37. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, when a group of transnational corporations played an active role in shaping Agenda 21, big business has associated itself ever more closely with the goal of promoting sustainable development. Many corporations have also encouraged a shift away from governmental regulation to "self-regulation" as a means of encouraging corporate environmental and social responsibility. However, there is considerable debate as to whether more "eco-efficient" resource management systems and self-regulation are contributing in any meaningful way to sustainable development, particularly in developing countries.

38. This programme of research and policy-dialogue, initiated in January 1997, seeks to (a) examine the role of big business in promoting environmental protection and social development; (b) assess the claims of large corporations that they are actively promoting sustainable development; and (c) identify the types of policy and political contexts that favour corporate environmental and social responsibility.

39. In September 1997, UNRISD and the Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica co-hosted an international workshop on business responsibility for environmental protection in developing countries. The four-day meeting brought together scholars, NGOs, international agency officials and business association representatives to examine the "greening of business" in developing countries.

40. The workshop opened with a session in which different stakeholders presented their perspectives on the potential and limits of corporate environmentalism. This was followed by a session on the political and policy backdrop to corporate environmentalism. Attention was focused on the respective roles of government regulation, "civil compliance" and corporate self-regulation; the roles that pressure groups and environmental and consumer activism have played in the greening of business; and the apparent shift from "confrontation" to "partnership" that has characterized business/NGO relationships in certain

countries. The workshop also considered the experience of corporate environmentalism in specific developing countries, focusing particular attention on the experience of Costa Rica. A final session identified key issues and relevant methodologies for future research in developing countries.

41. A report on the meeting is available from UNRISD in hard copy and can also be found on the Institute Web site. Workshop papers will be published in late 1998 in an edited volume, provisionally entitled *Business Responsibility and Environmental Protection in the South*. An abridged version in Spanish is also being prepared. In addition, funding is currently being sought for a set of country case studies that will examine the potential and limits of corporate environmentalism in greater depth.

E. Public Sector Reform and Crisis-Ridden States

42. This project examines key reforms in the public sectors of countries that have been affected by long-running economic crises and political instability. It focuses on issues of macroeconomic governance; aid dependence and State capacity; livelihood strategies and public administration; fiscal and political decentralization; interest groups and policy-making; and power sharing as an approach to the distribution and management of State power.

43. During 1998, 10 papers have been commissioned within the programme. They are divided into two groups, as outlined below.

44. The first group of five studies focuses on socio-economic issues of reform. One provides an overview and critique of new public management theory; three examine the roles of bilateral aid agencies in supporting public sector reforms in crisis States; and another focuses on the policy initiatives of the World Bank and UNDP. The papers on the bilateral agencies involve analysis of British, Canadian and Scandinavian aid programmes as they relate to macroeconomic governance and State capacity in recipient States. Each examines three broad issues: the effects of aid on macroeconomic imbalances; the changing structures of incentives in recipient bureaucracies; and the problems of aid coordination and administrative workload. These papers will provide an opportunity to understand how different aid agencies are coping with the impacts of their programmes on the public sectors of crisis-ridden States. It should be noted that aid dependency — measured in terms of aid flows in relation to gross domestic product, or aid flows in relation

to export earnings — is extraordinarily high in the countries that this project seeks to study.

45. The second group of studies commissioned to inaugurate the project also consists of five papers, and deals with the socio-political aspects of public sector reform. The first two papers address the effects of economic liberalization and democratization on ongoing programmes of political and administrative decentralization and the potential and limitations of fiscal decentralization. The third looks at new approaches to the distribution and management of governmental power, or power sharing; the fourth examines recent trends in political plurality in the legislative and executive organs of crisis States that are in transition to democracy; and the fifth discusses interest groups and the policy-making process. These papers should be available in late 1998.

46. In addition, the project coordinator has prepared an empirical paper on the current state of political reforms in African countries.¹⁰ The paper provides a critical review of a large body of literature on democratization and examines in detail five main elements that have underpinned the processes of political reforms in African countries: constitutionality; the nature of political plurality in the legislative and executive arms of the state; trends in electoral reforms; decentralization; and power sharing. The paper stresses the need to analyse concrete political processes, rather than relying on broad discussion of the socio-economic preconditions for democracy in the region. In fact, differences among countries in levels of industrialization, types of State formation, methods of public administration and the development of modern social classes have not been significant determinants of real patterns of political change. Democratization has been the outgrowth of political phenomena — a function of the strength of opposition parties and groups in society, often in alliance with donor powers, to force incumbent Governments to honour basic rules of political contestation and uphold the rule of law.

F. Grass-roots Initiatives and Knowledge Networks for Land Reform in Developing Countries

47. This programme began in April 1997, with the partial financial support and collaboration of IFAD. It seeks to identify and document activities of various civil society organizations involved in promoting land reform or improving land tenure arrangements to the benefit of the poorer and weaker sections of the rural population in different socio-economic, political and ecological contexts.

The objective of the programme is not only to discover who is doing what, but also to examine more carefully a variety of land reform/tenurial security experiences, to learn how local groups have been able to assert their interests more effectively and to suggest ways in which this knowledge could be disseminated and utilized through effective networking. During the past year, five sets of activities have been carried out.

48. Establishment of a knowledge network. To facilitate the exchange of promising ideas and experiences, UNRISD helped IFAD to establish a knowledge network on land reform with seven regional components: South-East Asia/the Pacific; South Asia; Near East/the Maghreb; Southern Africa; West/Central Africa; Central America/the Caribbean; and South America. This effort dovetailed with the creation of national networks in 23 countries where land reform is an acute socio-economic and political issue.

49. Generation of information on civil society initiatives. In April 1997, UNRISD sent out a questionnaire requesting information on popular initiatives and project experiences in the field of land reform and tenurial improvement. The questionnaire was distributed to 1,559 peasant associations, rural development organizations, research institutes, NGOs and government bodies. Many of those responding to the questionnaire expressed their interest in the project and provided useful material. Although the area in which they often work is awareness-raising, civil society organizations have undertaken more challenging tasks such as identifying the beneficiaries of land redistribution measures, finding land for sale, providing legal aid, promoting the rights of indigenous people and women, launching rural credit and savings schemes, organizing communities to practise sustainable land use management, and establishing far-reaching contacts with other like-minded individuals and groups.

50. Preparation of regional overview papers. The coordinators of the seven regional networks have completed draft outlines of overview papers. Despite considerable variation in length and quality, they provide interesting insights into the historical, social and political complexities of land reform. They also provide useful information on the role of grass-roots organizations in each region. In particular, the papers highlight a range of efforts in the area of popular mobilization, networking and the actual implementation of specific land reform initiatives.

51. Commissioning of thematic papers. The Institute has also commissioned thematic papers on such questions as the historical background of well-known social movements involving the peasantry; the role of the State in promoting

land reform; the market-assisted land reform approach; the management of agrarian conflicts by grass-roots organizations; and legal aid in the context of land reforms. A number of these papers are being published in the Institute's Discussion Paper series.

52. Future programme. Building on the work undertaken over the last 12 months, a detailed programme for future research and action has been elaborated. This programme proposes to examine the potential of mobilization and action "from below" to achieve more comprehensive land reform in different contexts. It will be necessary to explore current trends in the capacity of grass-roots organizations to promote (a) political mobilization and direct action, (b) tenurial security, (c) conflict management, (d) monitoring and defending land and basic human rights, and (e) improved post-reform production structures and livelihoods. The aim is to generate more solid information on grass-roots mobilizations and initiatives, as well as to encourage dialogue, networking, exchange of valuable information and participatory project planning, leading to improved tenure relations and rural livelihoods. Among other activities, in-depth research may be conducted in a number of developing countries and a new bulletin on land reform may be inaugurated. This programme of work would extend over a three-year period beginning in 1999.

G. Emerging National and Regional Mass Tourism in Developing Countries

53. This project explores the socio-economic, cultural and environmental implications of emerging national and regional mass tourism in the South. More specifically, the study attempts to collect, examine and disseminate detailed information on the nature, magnitude and impact of domestic and regional tourism in different socio-economic and environmental contexts and on diverse social groups. Concrete attempts to formulate policy for coping with national and regional mass tourism are also evaluated. The analysis of policy issues is especially important because national and regional tourism are likely to involve large numbers of people, thereby challenging the practice of sustainable, ecological or "managed" tourism. The project emphasizes the need to offset the more negative impacts of national and regional mass tourism through appropriate information and awareness campaigns and tourism policies that reflect the needs and interests of domestic and regional tourists, as well as their potential contribution to local employment and national output.

54. During 1998, background papers on Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa and Thailand have been completed. The studies document the growth of national tourism and analyse its impact on the national economy, culture, political life and the environment. They also identify research gaps and suggest appropriate methodologies for possible future country studies.

H. Applied Research on the Gender Focal Point System of the International Labour Organization

55. In 1997, the Economic and Social Council recommended mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. This prompted the International Labour Organization (ILO) Office of the Special Adviser for Women Workers' Questions (FEMMES), responsible for gender mainstreaming within that organization, to look carefully at the gender focal point system. Set up in 1989 in all headquarters departments and the field structure, the gender focal point system supports efforts to mainstream gender concerns in ILO activities — ranging from standard setting and technical cooperation to research and policy advice. As part of this review process, a joint applied research project has been elaborated by UNRISD and ILO to explore the critical role that gender focal points can potentially play in gender mainstreaming and to make recommendations for strengthening the system in line with the directive of the Economic and Social Council. UNRISD's involvement in this research builds upon earlier activities undertaken as part of phase one of the Technical Cooperation and Women's Lives project.¹¹

56. The research, involving desk reviews, questionnaires and in-depth interviews with ILO gender focal points, other staff and social partners, as well as regular consultative meetings with the Office of the Special Adviser for Women Workers' Questions, commenced in February 1998 and is expected to conclude in the autumn of 1998. It should contribute to current thinking about the strategy of gender mainstreaming and the kind of institutional and policy changes that might best support its implementation. In this connection, two main sets of issues are being explored.

57. **Institutional arrangements.** The research will develop a profile of the gender focal points (technical/analytical background, professional status and promotion prospects); their selection process; their structural location and linkages to FEMMES and other gender focal points; their familiarity with organization-wide gender

policy and guidelines; and their responsibilities and functions (e.g. programmatic, research, policy development, human resources), with particular attention to how far these are accurately reflected in their job descriptions. In many cases, institutional arrangements, including criteria for selection and designation of functions, appear to be mainly ad hoc, raising questions about how far appropriate mechanisms have been established to support gender mainstreaming.

58. **Implementation.** The research aims to go beyond a static profile of the gender focal point system. Interviews with gender focal points and other key staff members will explore in some detail the actual processes through which gender mainstreaming takes place (or fails to occur). Recent research in other institutional contexts suggests that there may have been too much emphasis in the past on structures/guidelines as determining variables in policy formulation and implementation and not enough attention to the ways in which individual actors shape the content of policy at every level.

III. Continuing programme of research

A. War-torn Societies Project

59. When the War-torn Societies Project (WSP) was created in 1994, there was widespread disenchantment with the effectiveness of the international response to complex emergencies and post-conflict situations. In this context, UNRISD launched a collective experiment of researchers and the principal bilateral and multilateral agencies, designed to highlight the complex issues at stake and to explore innovative approaches to rebuilding war-torn societies.

60. Four years and four country projects later, WSP is nearing completion. A brief update on the project's activities in Eritrea, Mozambique, Guatemala and Somalia, as well as a description of activities at the central level, follows.

61. **Eritrea.** WSP-Eritrea came to a close on 31 October 1997. Although considerable thought had been given by internal and external actors to the establishment of a successor body, which could continue to apply the WSP approach and methodology to facilitate research in areas considered of major importance for the country's reconstruction, this did not materialize. Nevertheless Eritrean authorities expressed strong interest in the continued use of WSP methodology in Eritrea and the expansion of WSP-type activities to the Horn of Africa.

62. **Mozambique.** The final project group meeting, held on 27 April 1998, marked the close of the Mozambique project and provided a forum for participants to assess the impact of WSP in that country. They agreed that the project had provided an informal space where internal and external actors could get together and discuss strategic rebuilding issues, and had permitted an exchange of ideas between individuals and organizations which otherwise might not have taken place.

63. A new centre for policy dialogue is currently being set up to continue WSP-type activities in Mozambique. The centre's main objective will be to promote dialogue on policies and development programmes, on the basis of both classic and interactive research methods. Several modalities for collaboration with international institutions are currently being explored.

64. **Guatemala.** Research continued in Guatemala throughout 1997: by the end of November, five documents containing concrete policy recommendations on the themes of modernization and strengthening of the State had been produced; economic and social development; administration of justice and civil security; and multiculturalism.¹² These documents were the result of a multisectoral consensus-building effort, in which representatives of government institutions, political parties, academic centres, NGOs and civil society participated. The documents were reviewed and approved at the third project group meeting on 10 November 1997.

65. A report summing up the project's experience and recommendations was written for the final project group meeting¹³ on 12 March 1998, which brought WSP-Guatemala to a close. It was agreed that follow-up activities would continue through academic networks and NGO projects. The Government will also consider adopting an interactive methodology in the National Development Councils System, as a mechanism to enable the Councils to fulfil their role of promoting decentralization and citizen participation in development planning processes.

66. **Somalia.** The WSP Somali programme, whose support office is located in Nairobi, has operated in three regions of north-eastern Somalia (Bari, Nugaal and Mudug) since early 1997. In August 1997, WSP researchers held a series of meetings with the principal internal and external actors in the north-east, gathering a substantial amount of information on different actors' attitudes towards various rebuilding issues. Based on the meetings, draft assessments of the key issues facing the different regions (Regional Notes) were completed.¹⁴ These formed the basis for extensive consultations throughout north-eastern Somalia, focusing on

three major themes: political, economic and social reconstruction.

67. The WSP Somali programme entered its main research phase on 15 March 1998, following a meeting in north-east Somalia attended by a wide range of actors, including representatives of regional administrations, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front, traditional leaders and international officials. Issues for further research include rebuilding basic institutions of local and regional government; social integration of refugees and internally displaced persons; the role of various actors in the provision of social services; and economic rebuilding.

68. The project is currently extending its activities beyond the north-east. Following several exploratory missions, a WSP project in the north-west (the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland) was established in August 1998.

69. Efforts will now focus on the development of a more autonomous local structure for the WSP Somali Programme, which is likely to take the form of an independent development-oriented organization, jointly managed by a board of internal and external actors. The emphasis will be on greater functional independence for field activities in both north-east and north-west Somalia, and later possibly in the south. The Nairobi office is expected to terminate its activities in December 1998, and its functions may then be taken over by an umbrella organization.

70. **Drawing lessons.** Over the course of the programme's final year, emphasis is being placed on documenting the experience of the War-torn Societies Project and making the lessons learned at the country level accessible to a wider audience. This exercise is organized around three tracks. First, the programme will produce a series of papers that analyse the WSP approach and assess field experience in the four study countries. These documents will be presented at a series of regional meetings to be held during October and November 1998. In addition, WSP is co-publishing relevant material produced by the country project staff. In Eritrea, Mozambique and Guatemala a "companion report" to the country assessment is being compiled and will be published in late 1998.

71. To complement these core papers based on concrete WSP experiences, two thematic papers have also been written, one on the macroeconomic aspects of post-war rebuilding and the other on the role of women in post-conflict situations.¹⁵ The project has also continued to produce its newsletter, *The Challenge of Peace*, as well as its Research Updates¹⁶ and to regularly update its Web site. In October 1997, a database containing references to and

summaries of over 1,500 documents on post-conflict reconstruction was made available on the Internet.

72. Under Track Two of its dissemination strategy, WSP is working closely with policy makers and operational actors to translate project lessons into tools for improved policy formulation and operational implementation — tools such as policy recommendations, operational guidelines and training manuals.

73. A Track Two workshop was held in Addis Ababa from 30 March to 3 April 1998, bringing together representatives from all four WSP country projects to discuss experiences and lessons in a comparative perspective and to explore their relevance for the Horn of Africa with key actors from the region. A second Track Two workshop was then held with senior representatives from international organizations and donor agencies in Bossy, Geneva, in late June 1998 to review and discuss selected WSP lessons in the light of participants' own experience and to begin translating them into practical tools to improve external assistance to war-torn societies.

74. Finally, under Track Three of the dissemination programme, the project will produce brochures, articles, press releases and audio-visual products that can be targeted to selected audiences. There will be a mailing campaign and a series of regional conferences in Europe and North America over a period of several weeks in late 1998.

B. Vulnerability and Coping Strategies in Cambodia

75. This project consisted of three independent studies. The first dealt with issues of food security, the second with psycho-social vulnerability¹⁷ and the third with the role of international and national institutions in the transition to democracy and a market economy following years of war, authoritarian rule and international isolation.

76. **Food security.** Field work for the study on food security, coordinated by the Cambodian Development Resource Institute (CDRI), was completed in mid-1997, and the final project conference was held in Phnom Penh the following October. This two-day meeting, where draft papers summarizing the main findings of the study were presented, was attended by approximately 90 people from government ministries, NGOs, research centres and multilateral organizations.¹⁸ Presentations were also made by the Under-Secretaries of State for Agriculture, Rural Development and Health, as well as by several

representatives of NGOs and multilateral agencies who considered the policy implications of the study.

77. These and other participants noted that the study had not only provided important baseline data on household food security in Cambodia and played a useful role in training Cambodian researchers, but that it had also stimulated considerable discussion and debate in policy-making circles. It was important to know, for example, that household food security was threatened because many households were having to divert resources from food-related expenditures to health, in a context where health conditions and public health services had deteriorated. And it was also useful to remember that food security policy should go beyond a narrow focus on rice production, consumption and related calorie intake to consider the provision of health services, clean water, sanitation, education, income generation and access to land.

78. The final report on food security is due by late-1998 and will be published in both English and Khmer in early 1999.

79. **Transition and development strategy.** Although the study on transition and development strategies was completed in early 1997, a number of dramatic events in Cambodia during the subsequent period made it essential to update the final report before publication. The author agreed to do so and returned to Cambodia in September. The revised report¹⁹ will be co-published with Brookings Institution Press in 1999.

C. Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development

1. Advancing the Social Agenda: Two Years after Copenhagen

80. UNRISD has been, and continues to be, deeply involved in the work of the World Summit for Social Development. During the preparatory process of 1994–1995, the Institute organized two conferences at United Nations Headquarters in New York (the first on ethnic conflict and the second on economic restructuring and social policy).²⁰ These events coincided with official Preparatory Committee meetings and were well attended by members of official delegations, NGOs and scholars. In addition, a series of UNRISD Briefing Papers and Occasional Papers, providing analysis of current social issues, were made widely available to participants in the preparatory process. These can now be consulted on-line, through the Institute Web site. In addition, the Institute prepared an influential report for the World

Summit for Social Development, entitled *States of Disarray: The Social Effects of Globalization*, which has subsequently been translated into six languages and is now going into its third edition in English.

81. At the Copenhagen conference, UNRISD sponsored an international conference on rethinking social development,²¹ attended by more than 1,000 people; a seminar on the future of the welfare state,²² held jointly with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and two events in the NGO Forum, including a round table on cities in crisis: responses from the grassroots and pavement.

82. In the period since the Summit, UNRISD has organized two large public conferences in Geneva, both timed to coincide with the European meetings of the Economic and Social Council. The first event (*After the Social Summit: Implementing the Programme of Action*) was held in the Palais des Nations on 4 July 1995, and the second (*Advancing the Social Agenda: Two Years after Copenhagen*) on 9 and 10 July 1997.²³

83. In both follow-up conferences, UNRISD attempted to encourage the exchange of up-to-date information on major initiatives taken by Governments, international agencies and civil society organizations to further the Programme of Action of the Summit. And at the second event, a special effort was made to highlight promising approaches in such fields as mobilizing resources for social development; learning from "successful" attempts to provide universal social services; promoting harmony in multi-ethnic societies; dealing with the legacy of hatred in countries torn by civil war; and developing community-based approaches to urban social problems.

84. Discussions on these questions at the July 1997 meeting made it clear that, while certain initiatives are indeed leading to positive results at the local or national level, responses at the international level are not sufficient for these to gain any real momentum on a global scale. Global economic liberalization poses enormous challenges to those who are working to reduce unemployment and poverty and to promote social solidarity. In the face of an often unfavourable economic environment, NGOs confront the dilemma of how best to further their own programmes of action. If they seek to expand or "scale up" their efforts, they risk becoming the mirror image of large, bureaucratic institutions, with all the attendant problems of accountability and effectiveness. If they become partners of international financial institutions, they risk co-optation. Yet, if they limit themselves only to the local or regional scale and refuse important outside resources, their efforts are likely to remain at best fragmented and possibly insignificant.

85. It was the opinion of many participants that organizations working for broad-based social development must improve their capacity to propose and support economic policies that will reduce social costs. This means familiarizing themselves with areas that are (for most of them) new and complex and (in the case of international NGOs) learning how to engage as credible and independent actors with international bodies usually outside their traditional sphere of interest, such as the World Trade Organization, the Group of Seven and subregional trade groupings. They must also attempt to revitalize the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development — organizations that have the obligation to play a major role in the follow-up to the Summit.

86. At the same time, participants at the conference agreed that a crucial element in strengthening the opportunities for civil society organizations to interact with intergovernmental institutions is achieving timely access to their own government negotiators. This is, in the final analysis, likely to be far more effective than mass accreditation to large international organizations; and in fact, the tendency to endlessly expand the access of national or local civil society organizations to intergovernmental institutions may weaken their overall legitimacy and effectiveness. Among other things, there is a risk that efforts to preserve and develop responsive Governments might be weakened if it were implied that civil society organizations selection processes in international organizations were on a par with general and democratic elections in individual country settings.

87. In the period leading up to the United Nations review of the World Summit for Social Development in 2000 (the "Copenhagen Plus Five" initiative), UNRISD plans to provide other opportunities for discussing and analysing such issues.

2. Research, Exchange and Action on Social Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

88. This project seeks to support efforts by NGOs in francophone sub-Saharan Africa to ensure that the recommendations of the Social Summit are integrated into the design and implementation of national social development plans. The research programme has two main dimensions: the development of guidelines for the identification and measurement of social development and the examination of interaction between central public actors and civil society groups involved in social development to facilitate their collaboration.

89. Owing to the difficult political situation in several participating countries in Central Africa, a modified work

programme was elaborated which involved the preparation of "think pieces" by small research teams of NGOs in Cameroon and Gabon. Draft reports were submitted by December 1997 on NGO relations with their social partners in Cameroon and on the determinants of poverty in Gabon.²⁴

90. In West Africa, work progressed on a programme developed at the March 1997 regional workshop. Two priority themes were identified at that meeting — the elaboration of modalities for effective collaboration around jointly defined social development goals, including an emphasis on contractual arrangements that clearly specify division of labour and responsibility; and the development of suitable tools for measuring progress in social development, in particular in urban settlements. Following the meeting, a number of background methodology papers and guidelines were prepared by the project coordinator and distributed to the working groups to help focus the research.²⁵ A think piece on the integration of migrants in Dakar and Bamako was also prepared by the West African working group.²⁶

3. Community Perspectives on Urban Governance

91. This project aims to identify promising instances of, and constraints on, collaboration between community-based/volunteer organizations and local governments in designing, implementing and evaluating social and economic policy at the local level. Co-sponsored by United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the programme began in late 1995 as a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. Since then, 20 case studies have been conducted in Chicago, United States of America, Johannesburg, South Africa, Lima, Peru, Mumbai, India, and São Paulo, Brazil, along with related research in east St. Louis, United States of America, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam and Jinja, Uganda. An additional set of brief case studies in six Chinese cities was carried out in 1997 in preparation for the UNRISD workshop on "Comparative Perspectives on Decentralized Governance in a Globalizing World", held in Shanghai in October 1997.

92. The purpose of the Shanghai meeting was twofold: to disseminate the results of the studies completed earlier in the project and to better understand how Chinese cities are attempting to come to grips with the stresses and strains caused by rapid rural-urban migration and other compound effects of deepening economic and administrative reforms. The meeting brought together urban planners, officials and scholars from six large and medium-sized Chinese cities, researchers involved in the UNRISD/UNV project and observers from foundations, international NGOs and multilateral development agencies for the three days of

discussion and site visits. Participants sought to identify the extent to which Chinese cities had begun responding to pressures on physical and social infrastructure by opening up new channels of participation in decision-making processes and to gauge whether such changes had begun to affect the living and working conditions of residents.

93. On the third day of the meeting, participants reflected on the state of and prospects for participation in planning and decision-making in Chinese cities. Almost all agreed that simply informing residents of plans or taking opinion surveys did not constitute participation. Residents should have an active role in decision-making and implementation of policies, either through their neighbourhood or street committees or other organized bodies. Participants felt that it would be useful to experiment with some of the participatory techniques that cities in other countries are using and particularly to understand the roles and potential of NGOs in building the capacity of community groups and local authorities to undertake bottom-up community development initiatives. They also recognized the importance of institutionalizing participation in planning by incorporating appropriate legal mechanisms in planning statutes.

94. A report (in Chinese) of the meeting has been prepared and distributed and discussions are under way with foundations, Chinese scholars and government officials to decide how best to proceed with new research on popular participation in urban governance in China.²⁷

95. A paper synthesizing the case studies and local-level dialogues undertaken as part of the project in Chicago has been published as an UNRISD Discussion Paper and another on Lima is forthcoming.²⁸

IV. Publications and dissemination

A. Publications

96. UNRISD publishes books, monographs, Discussion Papers, Occasional Papers and newsletters. Co-publication agreements with commercial publishers provide the opportunity to reach a wide audience through professionally produced books. Publications produced in-house provide flexibility in determining format, pricing and distribution policies. During the biennium 1997–1998, 14 books were co-published with commercial or academic presses and three monographs were printed by UNRISD. In addition, the Institute published 17 Discussion and 8 Occasional Papers. UNRISD News appeared twice yearly in English, French and

Spanish. Two project newsletters (FOCUS on Integrating Gender into the Politics of Development and The Challenge of Peace) were also distributed.

97. The UNRISD report for the World Summit for Social Development, entitled *States of Disarray: The Social Effects of Globalization*, was originally published in 1995 in English, French and Spanish. During 1997–1998, it was translated into Arabic, Chinese, Korean and Russian and distributed by publishers in those language regions. The English edition of the book is now in its third printing.

B. Dissemination

98. UNRISD dissemination channels include conferences and workshops, specialized and mass media, direct mail and distribution agreements. In addition, a special effort has been made over the past biennium to reach a wider and more diverse audience through the redesign and improvement of the Institute's World Wide Web site (<http://www.unrisd.org>).

99. UNRISD ON-LINE is now divided into seven main sections. *About UNRISD* contains answers to a list of frequently asked questions, provides the user with a brief history of the Institute and outlines the distinctive research approach of UNRISD. *Research Programme* provides short overviews of all current and recent research projects. This section also includes on-line versions of the Institute's last three annual progress reports. *Global Conferences* highlights Institute conferences on issues of social development. In the future this space will also be used to promote and publicize conferences more effectively. *Publications* includes a revised and reorganized publications catalogue, easy access to an alphabetical list of on-line publications and *UNRISD News* Numbers 13 through 17. *Policy Briefs* contains documents of particular relevance to policy makers and others seeking concise information on social development issues. *Viewpoints* contains signed "think pieces" on social development issues, printed in *UNRISD News*. *Media Information* includes recent press releases, selected reviews of UNRISD publications and articles on UNRISD work.

100. Because many of the people interested in UNRISD research come from the developing world, questions remain regarding the World Wide Web's reach into areas still largely "unconnected". In March 1998, visits to the site were distributed by region as follows: North America, 60 per cent; Western Europe, 13 per cent; Asia, 10 per cent; ".org" addresses, 3 per cent (these are not region or country specific); Latin America, 3 per cent; Australia and New Zealand, 2 per cent; Africa, 0.4 per cent; Eastern Europe, 0.3

per cent; and the Middle East, 0.2 per cent. To mitigate this problem, the new site has been copied from the World Wide Web and made available by e-mail for people without access to an Internet browser. It will soon be available on diskette for those without e-mail access.

101. By late 1998, 73 full-text documents (Discussion and Occasional Papers, as well as conference reports and newsletters) were available on the UNRISD Web site and could be downloaded without permission for use by interested readers. In addition, the Web site of the UNRISD programme on Information Technologies and Social Development contained seven full-text papers and that of the War-torn Societies Project, six.

102. Dissemination by post is supported by the UNRISD mailing list, containing approximately 9,000 addresses, of which half are in the developing world. Almost all entries in the mailing list receive *UNRISD News* free of charge. Approximately 400 automatically receive Discussion Papers, Occasional Papers and conference reports as well. UNRISD has exchange agreements with 95 institutes, journals and organizations around the world. In addition, UNRISD receives approximately 20 to 25 requests for information and publications each day from NGOs, research institutes, government ministries, students, universities and libraries.

103. A general agreement was established in 1998 to list Institute publications in the well-known bibliographic data base, Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS). UNRISD publications also continue to be regularly used for academic courses and for training in institutions around the world. They are displayed at international scientific conferences, NGO events, book fairs, national seminars and workshops. And press releases on each publication are distributed to approximately 300 media contacts.

V. Consultancy and advisory work

104. In addition to their ongoing research and administrative activities, UNRISD staff members are increasingly called upon to act in a range of advisory roles for United Nations agencies, multilateral and bilateral organizations, Governments, NGOs, research institutes and universities. Work of this nature provides UNRISD with opportunities to make substantive contributions to the thinking and programmes of other institutions and groups, while staff members benefit from the exchange of ideas and are also able to network, identify potential researchers and explore funding opportunities. Over the period 1997–1998, the Institute advised the Joint United Nations Programme on

HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the World Health Organization, the Canadian International Development Agency, IFAD, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Australian Research Council, the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Network of the World Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the World Wide Fund for Nature and Transparency International, among others.

105. In late spring 1997 the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat requested that UNRISD undertake a review of the following United Nations social "flagship" reports: *Report on the World Social Situation*, *World Population Monitoring*, *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics*, *The State of World Population*, *The State of the World's Refugees*, *The State of the World's Children and the Human Development Report*.

106. The terms of reference asked that UNRISD analyse the objectives of the different reports; identify their target audiences, consider the value added of each, assess areas of overlap or inconsistency and suggest feasible changes in their orientation. The completed review was submitted to the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs in December 1997.

VI. Internship programme

107. The internship programme provides a limited number of outstanding graduate students from around the world the opportunity to gain valuable experience in an international research institute. Interns are selected on the basis of their academic experience and interests and must have a strong recommendation from their university. Students selected for the unpaid internships spend a minimum of two months at UNRISD assisting project coordinators in developing project proposals, compiling annotated bibliographies, helping to organize research seminars, translating correspondence and carrying out various tasks in the Reference Centre.

108. Over the period 1997–1998, students from Argentina, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Pakistan, Peru, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the former Yugoslavia participated in the programme. A small number of interns

continued to contribute to the Institute's work as full-time research assistants after their internships were completed.

VII. Financial situation

109. Although part of the United Nations system, UNRISD finances all of its activities by voluntary contributions from Governments, international development agencies and foundations. In 1997–1998, the core funding of the Institute was provided by Denmark, Finland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Twenty-six bilateral and multilateral agencies and foundations supported the research programme of the Institute.

110. UNRISD expenditures in 1997 grew by 6.4 per cent over the previous year and are expected to expand by another 6 per cent in 1998, reaching a total of US\$ 5.36 million. Following a favourable evaluation of the Institute by the Nordic countries in 1997, Sweden renewed its three-year grant. Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Norway increased their core contributions considerably in 1998.

Notes

¹ *Report of the UNRISD International Conference on Globalization and Citizenship*, UNRISD, Geneva, September 1997.

² Alastair Davidson and Kathleen Weekley (eds.), *Globalization and Citizenship in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Macmillan, London, forthcoming.

³ Paula Uimonen, *Cultural Encounters in Cyberspace*, paper presented at the International Telecommunication Union virtual conference on the Asia Internet Forum: Cultural Identity, 9–20 March 1998; and Paula Uimonen, "Addressing the Social Needs of the Digital Future", paper published in the *Proceedings of Telecom Inter@active*, Geneva, International Telecommunication Union, September 1997.

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Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda*

**Programme questions and other matters: United Nations Research
Institute for Social Development**

Nomination of members of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The functions of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, which are set out in paragraph 3 of document ST/SGB/126 of 1 August 1963 and in its addenda, are:

(a) To lay down general rules governing the action of the Institute in matters entrusted to it;

(b) To review and approve work programmes and the relevant budgets of the Institute;

(c) To submit regularly to the Commission for Social Development a progress report on the work of the Institute.

2. The present composition of the Board is:

(a) A chairman, appointed by the Secretary-General;

(b) Ten members nominated by the Commission for Social Development and confirmed by the Economic and Social Council;

(c) A representative of the Secretary-General;

(d) A representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat;

(e) The Director of the Latin American and

Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning, Santiago, Chile;

(f) The Director of the Asian and Pacific Development Institute, Bangkok, Thailand;

(g) The Director of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, Dakar, Senegal;

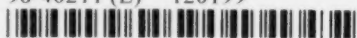
(h) The Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia;

(i) Representatives of two of the following specialized agencies, appointed in rotation: the International Labour Organization; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; and the World Health Organization;

(j) The Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, ex officio.

3. The 10 members of the Board referred to in subparagraph 2 (b) above are nominated by the Commission for Social Development and confirmed by the Economic and Social Council. The term of office of each nominated member is four years, renewable once for a further period of two years.¹

* E/CN.5/1999/1.



4. Juan Somavía (Chile) has been Chairman of the Board since 1996. The nominated members of the Board are:

Heba Handoussa (Egypt), Managing Director, Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries, Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey;

Eveline Herfkens (Netherlands), former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Geneva; currently Minister for Development Cooperation of the Netherlands;

Björn Hettne (Sweden), Professor of Peace and Development Research, University of Göteborg;

Graça Machel (Mozambique), President of the Foundation for Community Development in Maputo;

Jonathan Moore (United States of America), Shorenstein Center for Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts;

Harris Mutio Mule (Kenya), Director, Top Investment Management Services, Nairobi;

Marcia Rivera (United States — Puerto Rico), Special Adviser to the Director-General, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Caracas;

Gita Sen (India), Professor of Economics and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore;

Frances Stewart (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Director, International Development Centre, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford;

Valery Tishkov (Russian Federation), Director, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow.

5. The term of office of the following five members will expire on 30 June 1999, and they are eligible for renomination for a further period of two years to 30 June 2001:

Harris Mutio Mule (Kenya), Valery Tishkov (Russian Federation), Björn Hettne (Sweden), Frances Stewart (United Kingdom), Jonathan Moore (United States).

6. The following four members, who were nominated two years ago, will continue to serve under terms that will expire on 30 June 2001:

Heba Handoussa (Egypt), Graça Machel (Mozambique), Marcia Rivera (United States — Puerto Rico), Gita Sen (India). The position formerly occupied by Ms. Herfkens, who has taken up the post of Minister of Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, will need to be filled.

7. Thus, at its thirty-seventh session, the Commission will be called upon to renominate the five existing members of the Board referred to in paragraph 5 above for a further period of two years to 30 June 2001, and to nominate one new member to the Board for a period of four years to 30 June 2003 to replace Ms. Herfkens, as referred to in paragraph 6 above.

8. The following new candidate has been identified as having the appropriate qualifications and will maintain regional balance in the membership of the Board: Jacques Roger Baudot (France). Mr. Baudot's biographical information is contained in the annex to the present note.

Notes

¹ In its resolution 10 (XXV), the Commission for Social Development decided that the term of office of each nominated member of the Board should not exceed a total of six years.

Annex

Biographical information

Jacques Roger Baudot (France)

Jacques Roger Baudot is currently Senior Adviser to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Secretary of the Copenhagen Seminars for Social Progress.

- Education:** Philosophy, University of Dijon; Master of Political Science, Paris.
- Experience:** Senior Adviser, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for the follow-up of the World Summit for Social Development, 1995–.
- Coordinator of the preparation of the World Summit for Social Development, New York, 1993–1995.
- Controller, United Nations, New York, 1991–1993.
- Director of the Budget, United Nations, New York, 1985–1991.
- Programming and coordination of United Nations economic and social activities, New York, 1982–1985.
- Researcher, social surveys, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 1974–1981.
- Researcher, UNRISD, Geneva, 1970–1974.
- Social scientist, Planning Commission, Paris, 1964–1970.
- Researcher, Institute for Demographic Studies, Paris, 1962–1964.
- Professional activities:** As member of the French Administration, participation in work on documents and books on social transfers and social indicators. In the United Nations, participation in the drafting of a large number of documents, including the Report on the World Social Situation. Involvement in intergovernmental negotiations on financial and other substantive matters. Frequent lecturer on issues of globalization and development. Currently preparing, in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a book on the findings of the Copenhagen Seminars for Social Progress.